



Towards a better, more equal world

Louise Zanré, Director of JRS UK, shares her witness of the journey that many refugees make once they get to the UK.

The last few weeks have been astonishing: the media has been full of reports of refugees and migrants on the long journey to Europe and within Europe. I think all of must have seen at least one of the images of people walking - en route to protection, safety and a better life. I think most of us will also have seen reported the outpouring of sympathy, generosity, welcome from members of the local community at various points of that journey: people bringing water, food, clothing, toys to people forced to find a safe place in the world for themselves and their families.

The astonishing thing is not the fact that so many people are on the move as there have been tens on millions of refugees each year globally for decade. Nor is it that it is happening in Europe, for we have had huge flows of refugees in Europe before - and within living memory, most recently with the conflict in Ukraine, but also in the 1990s with the conflict surrounding the break-up of Yugoslavia. Nor even is it the depth of the generosity of spirit demonstrated by the refugees and by people welcoming them.

It has been the hope. Yes, refugees always hope to find safety and protection. And hope along with faith gives a resilience to people to help them overcome obstacles and dangers. But there has also been an outpouring of hope more widely, at least amongst the public, if not always from politicians and governments.

We have been privileged at Jesuit Refugee Service in the last few weeks to see some of the outpouring of support from the British public. Individuals, families, communities, parishes have got in touch with us offering financial and prayerful support for our projects throughout Europe, heeding Pope Francis' call and wanting to offer accommodation to refugees, and asking us what they can do to support refugees.

A lot of focus has been placed on Syrian refugees, and in particular on the 20,000 Syrians to be resettled in to the UK by 2020. The concern for this particular group could very easily take over leading us to forget the very many other refugees in the world - there are currently over 60 million refugees worldwide according to the UN High Commission for Refugees - and also the asylum seekers already in the UK, thousands of whom have been left destitute by our asylum process here.

However, there is hope here too in the day to day actions taken by so many in support of these individuals who are destitute; those who host them in their own homes, who welcome them into their faith communities, who volunteer at day centres, who visit those detained under the immigration rules, and who prayerfully and financially support organisations such as Jesuit Refugee Service.

Each of these everyday actions stands up to the violence of despair and builds resilience and hope in the community. Together we are slowly, actively helping people come to terms with painful memories, and we are inspiring compassion and wisdom more generally; and hopefully, actively contributing towards a better, more equal world.

That is why every email, phone call, and letter we have received asking "what can I do to support refugees?" makes me rejoice and also personally very thankful.

This article first appeared in The Universe newspaper (24 October 2015).

together

To me if it was not JRS I should have not achieved what I have today.

Diana shares her journey through the UK asylum process, detention and then on to university, a job and volunteering at JRS.

My name is Diana, I arrived in UK in 2002 and I applied for asylum on the same day. I have been a volunteer at Jesuit Refugee Service since summer 2007.

In May 2004 my initial claim was refused and so from that day I did not receive any help from the government while I was appealing. I had to rely on Jesuit Refugee Service and individual people where I would get a pack of food and a pack of hygiene products on a weekly basis, and twice a week I would go to the Notre Dame Refugee Centre for a free counselling and this was organised by JRS.

As I had no income, I had to walk everywhere including signing at the Home Office Reporting Centre at London Bridge every week. Then when I come to JRS they welcomed me in and helped me with the transport so I didn't walk again. To me if it was not JRS I should have not achieved what I have today. JRS welcomes everybody with an open hand, they carry you as your and help you until you reach your destination.



In 2006 I was detained at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre for three months and was finally recognised as a refugee in the UK in August 2010. I am a graduate with upper second class Honours in Biomedical Science which was funded by JRS, different charities through JRS and individual people I met through JRS because I didn't have the right to work and was not entitled to state money at that time. I was trained by JRS how to write and to speak in public meetings and this helped me through my education.

From the Jesuit Refugee Centre, I met someone who helped me until I was able to stand on my own feet she took me in her two-bedroom flat. I am now working and I still come to help around. As a result of volunteering, I gained the experience which helped me to progress and obtained a degree in Biomedical Science, a job and a family and friends who are always there for me and I would like to say thanks to JRS and all these who donate to them that thank you so much for whatever you give us makes a big difference in every asylum seeker's life.

To donate to our Hardship Fund that provides small bursaries to help buy books or equipment for studies, go to www.justgiving.com/jesuitrefugeeservice or send a cheque into the office

It was really lovely, with things you had never seen before.

Ann-Marie shares her experience of visiting the Wallace Collection museum for the first time as part of a Family Day Out, hosted by refugee volunteer tour guides, trained in partnership with JRS UK.

When we arrived, all the place was nicely kept, all around the vicinity, it was a breath of beauty. The old fashioned things were things of quality, they lasted, not like what we see today.

It was a lovely welcome from Liliane, she made everyone feel comfortable. All the tours were very professional, I enjoyed them talking about the history, they were knowledgeable.

Upstairs and downstairs, there were historical paintings from all over the world, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, the armoury, it was really lovely, with things you had never seen before.

I brought my three grandchildren and my girlfriend brought her two sons. She has lived here but never visited before. She was excited, the kids were excited. The next day they were telling their friends at school about all the paintings they had seen like Michaelangelo.

My grandson took pictures of me dressing up in the armour hats, gloves... he thought I looked beautiful and showed all his friends the picture of his grandmother at the Wallace House. I would have liked to have dressed up in a full suit of armour!

We did drawing and made beautiful welcome cups with diamante decoration to take home, a lovely souvenir. The food was prepared for us. I wish more people had been able to come.

My granddaughter liked the stuffed dog! She also liked the picture of the lady in the blue dress that looks like the princess from Frozen. She'd like to go back one day, it was lovely.

Next time, I wish that we could go to the beach for a family day out, have a beach trip, cook some food. I love cooking! I could make food from my country for everyone.

To make a donation to enable us to put on another family day, please send a cheque to JRS UK, 2 Chandler Street, London E1W 2QT

I was thinking: I can do anything!

Victoire shares her experience of learning a new life skill – riding a bicycle

In the office, Liliane told me about the project. She said, you can learn for 9 weeks and then you will get a bike. Straight away I thought "oh, yes!". But I remembered I fell once when I had tried. But Liliane encouraged me, she said we were all the same as beginners, so I put my name down.

The first day, we met at the day centre at the Hurtado Centre. We were 10 women. We all met for the first time. I was nervous and more and more anxious. I was imagining how I might fall and get embarrassed in front of the other ladies.

We then went to a park. The tutors were patient and they showed a great deal of understanding. We were told the first steps. As I saw one of us going round and round, a feeling arose in me: "If she can do it, I can also". I was repeating this in my mind.

The tutors explained everything step by step. At that point, I didn't want to wobble anymore. So she helped me to imagine my balance. Then it just clicked inside me. With this step by step, I can see how to do help others from their point of view.

All of a sudden, I got the confidence and I followed her. In few minutes I was going round and round with confidence. It was the start of a great adventure. As the weeks passed, I learned to brake, to use the gears, and arm signalling, looking over my shoulders. It was just empowering.

I felt great. It felt exciting. I was laughing like I won a million pound lottery. I was thinking: "I can do anything; I can even pilot a plane if I learn to do it with patience". We are not stupid. I am not stupid. I can do something. I really wanted to cycle for long time but I found it daunting, that is why I was so excited.

After the third week, it was so nice, the freedom, something really changed in me as myself. So much so, that I feel that I can face anything. In fact, I have even decided to make a visit back home to my country for the very first time since I came to the UK. The cycling has given me great courage.

I am so glad I tried. I am so grateful the opportunity came. This was my time, I grabbed it and now I can cycle. Thank you at JRS for giving me this life changing opportunity. So I want to give a big thumbs up to all those, especially at The Bike Project, who allowed me to have this blessed experience.



www.thebikeproject.co.uk

Minestrone or mushroom?



Chef Tiam Tam is enjoying using his professional skills as a chef

That was the choice of soups on the menu for our first serving of hot soup at the JRS Day Centre. Thanks to the generosity of local cafe chain Soupe du Jour who agreed to put JRS on their roster of recipients of leftover soup, we are now able to offer hot soup to people coming to JRS on a Thursday. Some of the comments on the first day were:

"The best mushroom soup I ever had!"

"Thank you very much, it was amazing. God bless you to cook for us."

"It's great to have mushroom soup. Hot! Good taste! Healthy! Smells nice!"

Now we have suggestions of what to add with requests for rice, pasta, beans... and cake to make for a full menu!

At JRS we are lucky enough to have inherited a full kitchen in our building. We have worked hard, thanks to the efforts of one volunteer in particular and one of our refugees who is a

trained chef. We have tidied and cleaned, sorted out crockery and equipment, investigated regulations for allergens and run training sessions for Day Centre volunteers. Everyone serving has a smart apron and there is a menu with ingredients so diners can see what is available ...can choose what meets their diets and medical needs. We have even been awarded a Grade 5 for our kitchen hygiene and food safety from our local authority food inspector. The label is now proudly presented on the kitchen door at the Hurtado Centre.

Our chef Tiam Tam said: "Today it went good. It was fabulous. They liked it – from the comments they gave. It was a good experience for me. I am glad and confident that they loved it. I am improving to get ready, feel more relaxed and serve everyone. I am meeting new people I did not meet before at JRS. I love to cook because it is my passion. I feel great, comfortable and happy to cook in the kitchen. I have a lot of pleasure, it is nice to create a menu. It creates a nice ambience at the Day Centre. When everyone arrives, there is a nice

smell of the food. And they feel excited to see the chef in the kitchen, it gives them an appetite and to taste the flavours. It is healthier than only biscuits and sandwiches. We will to improve to accommodate their requests and increase their satisfaction as our guests."

One diner said: "This is the best soup I ever had in my life. So I hope that people will like it – perfect!"

Bon appétit! And many thanks to Soupe du Jour for working with us to make this possible.

We have been given some items by a food bank that, unlike many, does not refuse to help asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds. If you can match their contribution with a donation, we can buy some kitchen ingredients and start offering simple, hot meals as well this winter. Donate on-line via www.jrsuk.net or with a cheque to the office. Thank you

It was quite enjoyable, we learnt we are all in the same boat.

Sylvia trained as a researcher and helped with a three-year long research project with the Independent Academic Research Studies (IARS) Institute looking at the experience of asylum-seeking women in their dealings with the UK healthcare, legal and housing sectors.

I was referred to them by Migrants Resource Community Forum. First, we met the co-ordinator, then basically it involved researching about migrants, refugees and their access to healthcare, lawyers and housing. We were about 20 researchers in two groups. We did a training and we practised the research questions and techniques on ourselves first. It was quite enjoyable, we learnt we are all in the same boat. It was interesting you learn a lot about what's out there, what's happening and what's not happening, different changes with the government... But it was so sad, people suffered out there, even if you have permission to stay in the UK. We met a lady who had been here 10 years who was struggling with language.

We approached different NGOs where we could interview women or invite them to group discussions on their experiences, how it went when they first came to this country. Then we put across what we found. The main thing was the communication as not everyone

was conversant with English, so that was one of the biggest barriers, when they approached their GPs. They were often not able to express themselves fully, especially with a male GP or they found their information was not full passed on. And the time they had with the GP of 10 minutes was not enough, so they felt that it was rushed. It seemed paracetomal was prescribed to solve anything! The professionals themselves agreed it is not enough time! Not enough consistency of having the same GP, starting over with a new person each time was quite draining. It was felt that GPs and health practitioners needed to be educated in dealing with refugees and migrants. People had problems, but once they were shunned they found it much harder to express themselves with any confidence. Also waiting for appointments was a problem due to the lack of walk-in appointments.

The law services... there is legal aid where we found you have to keep chasing the solicitor to do something on your case, then you have the ones who pay solicitors who turn out to be shams, with others telling you all sorts of stories that don't make sense. They promise to do your paperwork, they charge you. People have lost thousands of pounds. We also looked at how people went to court and what the outcomes were not just or fair. So we heard from people who had been to the tribunals. One lady said the translator was mis-translating her

own words, sometimes she felt it might be better just to use broken English.

With housing people were finding it hard with asylum support scheme, for example, you are put in a room, like a mum with two kids in one room, but you complain about things and nothing is ever done. You are just a number to them and that's it, you have to be assertive to anything to get done. All we could do was to tell people which charities to approach for which things such as Red Cross and Refugee Council who could look for you and help you to apply for NASS.

It was quite interesting and enjoyable. It was good to hear people's point of view, to hear that it is not an easy process and accessing basic things is difficult for them, no-one has told them what's available to them. There needs to be more leaflets of what they can access. And information for professionals, for example, they don't recognise the ID paperwork you are given so it's frustration after frustration. There is a book that was published and we made film clips showed at the launch event. We are waiting for other funding for the advocacy work to continue, for another 3 year project.

You can read the results of Sylvia's advocacy project here: <http://www.iars.org.uk/content/AbusedNoMore>

together

JRS Prayers

A new resource with reflections for Advent are available from JRS UK. Contact uk@jrs.net to receive a pdf with ideas for prayer. Or phone with your contact details and we will send you a copy.

World Day of Prayer

World Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees

Read the Pope's statement and prayers for this day on the Vatican website.

What does JRS do?

We accompany, serve and advocate for refugees and forced migrants. In the UK, JRS works mainly with people in detention centres and with individuals left destitute by the asylum-seeking process.

Catholic Newspapers

Louise Zanre, Director, has an occasional column in The Universe as part of the National Justice & Peace Network and also in the Catholic Times as part of the Caritas Social Action Network. Look out for her articles pass them onto family or friends to read.

Schools Resources

JRS International have packs for primary and secondary schools with activities to engage pupils with the stories and experiences of refugees around the world. They provide suggestions for lessons and we can advise on follow-up responses such as toiletry pack collections: www.jrs.net

International Migrants Day 18th December

Why not celebrate with an event in your parish or community to honour the achievements of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who succeed despite their circumstances?



Don't forget to visit our facebook page for regular news and updates.

Did you like this newsletter? Spread the word and pass it on to someone who does not know JRS...

Please Make a Donation to our Hardship Fund Help JRS continue to ensure refugees can find success here in the UK

What should you do?

If you want to send a donation please send a cheque (payable to Jesuit Refugee Service) fill the information in the box on the right and send it back by post to:

**JRS-UK, The Hurtado Jesuit Centre,
2 Chandler Street, London E1W 2QT**

or make a secure payment on:
www.justgiving.com/jesuitrefugeeservice

If you want more information, please contact us on 020 7488 7310

Registered Charity Number 230165

- 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 25p in every pound)

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