

Annual Review 2005



“RAP’s staff play a vital role in meeting and helping arriving asylum seekers and other refugees in West London. People fleeing from persecution have suffered enormously. RAP and other workers ensure that they do not feel too alone as they confront an uncertain future in an environment in which they do not always receive the compassion their plight deserves. At a time when the very concept of asylum is under attack, we have to remember that millions of people around the world are being persecuted and need the vital protection the right to asylum provides.”

Peter Kessler

Spokesperson/Senior External Affairs Officer,
United Nations High Commission for Refugees



vision



VISION

The movement of people across borders is the story of our time. War and oppression mean that people flee their homes to seek safety in other countries. In the UK, this has challenged us to find humane ways of receiving new arrivals, supporting them while they request asylum, and helping them adjust when their claim has been decided.

Fifteen years ago, RAP was a small, airport-based project meeting asylum seekers off the plane and helping them for two or three days. We have developed into a lead agency working with refugees and asylum seekers during their first years in this country.

Our aim is to ensure that strong and high quality reception and support services are in place for this vulnerable group of people as they exercise the basic human right to request asylum and safety.

With a focus on service provision in West London, we have networks across the UK. Our clients are dispersed nationwide: strong links with other agencies are key to ensuring their well-being. Making the system humane and influencing asylum policy

require a partnership approach. RAP is able to draw not just on years of experience, but also on particular areas of expertise, such as working with women, children, families and people with special needs.

Our links are particularly strong in the West London area where there is a diverse and thriving refugee community – a community which includes many who are vulnerable. Local public services are increasingly aware of the need to find ways of working with acutely vulnerable groups, and RAP is forging new partnerships and sharing its expertise in order to help services understand the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and develop appropriate provision.

Another strength is our diverse and highly qualified staff, supported by skilled interpreters and volunteers. Our thanks go to them, and to all the organisations, funders, trustees and supporters who make our work possible.

Dr Girma Ejere, Chair, Board of Trustees

Elizabeth Little, Executive Director

Refugee Arrivals Project

- provides essential guidance and support to newly arriving and destitute asylum seekers during their first days in the UK
- works with asylum seekers and refugees based in West London through their first years in the UK
- offers expertise in working with vulnerable groups, including young people, families, women, people with special needs
- through partnership and policy works to raise awareness of the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and ensure the provision of high quality, cost-effective support



Dr Girma Ejere and Elizabeth Little



“When I arrived I didn't know about RAP. I was homeless, I slept in a phone box. Because of torture I was very ill, and ended up in hospital. Now my wife has come to join me, and through RAP she has the support and medical care she needs. I am living with my family again. The staff at RAP have really, really helped. They have saved our lives.”

Refugee from Uganda

safety



SAFETY

Destitute asylum seekers arriving at airports in the South East are referred by immigration officers to RAP's Heathrow office. Our clients are bewildered, frightened and exhausted. Through years of experience, we do all we can to help them understand their situation and what will happen.

At Heathrow, we see to their most immediate needs, finding them accommodation, making sure they are warm, ensuring that they have the right documents. RAP staff then get new arrivals a hostel or other basic accommodation where they can eat and rest before having further advice and guidance.

At Heathrow, we also meet other asylum seekers who need our help – people who have arrived by lorry, for instance, or who have just been released from detention centres. Our Heathrow office is open until 10pm weekdays and from 2.30pm at weekends and during holidays, and a member of staff is always on call.

Help for unaccompanied children

Children and young people who arrive in the UK without an adult are especially vulnerable. RAP runs a unique project to meet their needs. A Young Person's Adviser, based at Heathrow, liaises with immigration officers at airports and ports across the South East. He stays with young people throughout the bewildering hours at the airport, to act as an independent advocate. He also makes sure young people are safe and looked after once they are released.

Trafficking is a constant concern, and the Adviser monitors for this. He also works closely with social services departments and other services to raise awareness of the needs of unaccompanied children: he runs training sessions, advises on policy and takes part in key networks. RAP has produced a leaflet in nine languages for young people on their own, to help them understand their situation and get help.

When Sara and Tunde arrived from Zimbabwe, immigration officers asked RAP's Young Person's Adviser to help. Both children were very anxious and scared. At the same time, RAP was liaising with a refugee organisation to help a woman in Yorkshire whose children had just arrived at the airport. RAP connected the two cases, and immigration officers were able to speak directly to the children's mother.

The Young Person's Adviser sat with the children whilst arrangements were made for their mother to get to Heathrow. He provided toys, and made sure they had food and drink and that they understood what was happening. He contacted social services and arranged for the children to spend the night with a foster carer. He and a Social Worker took them to meet the foster carer and helped them settle for the evening.

The following morning he helped immigration officers and Social Services with identity checks. The family was reunited.

SUPPORT

RAP provides temporary accommodation for single people and families while they apply to the government's National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

Everyone staying with us needs guidance in some form. A specialist team helps them make the NASS application, and monitors the progress of each case. While they wait, people have many questions and multiple needs, and we do our best to ensure that these are met.

Most of our clients are dispersed by NASS to cities across the UK. We help them prepare for this. This can take two or three sessions: people need time to absorb and understand the information they are being given. By doing this we enable people to be more confident when they are moved on, with knowledge of where they can turn to for help when they reach their destination.

Working in West London

Many of our clients don't need the temporary accommodation that we provide. They stay in West London, and come to us for advice and support. This is a growing area of work for RAP: in addition to help with the NASS application, these clients have many needs. For many, the first years in the UK are a struggle, even if they are given permission to remain in the country. Housing, education, health, immigration law, family reunion – there is a wide range of issues where people feel overwhelmed and unsure of what to do.

Our West London work brings us into contact not just with growing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees, but also with many public sector, voluntary and community organisations.

Working in partnership with different agencies is enabling us to share our expertise, and develop more targeted services.

Ali is Iranian. He arrived at Heathrow in 2004 with his children, one of whom has a disability. RAP staff met the family at the airport, and organised somewhere for them to stay. Once he had rested, Ali went to RAP's Hounslow office, where staff explained to him the asylum support system, and helped him submit an application to NASS for basic support. We gave him advice on how to cope with his difficult situation, and what was likely to happen. RAP then helped the children enrol at school, and made sure the youngest child's special needs were being met. Ali was able to register with a doctor. RAP also helped him to meet others from the refugee community who could offer advice and support.

NASS informed RAP that Ali and his children would be dispersed to Newcastle. He was very anxious, and we spent time with him explaining the dispersal process, and giving him contact lists of organisations in Newcastle that could help him. This year Ali wrote to tell us how much the family likes Newcastle: "Thank you for all you've done and your kind advice".



“RAP gave me somewhere to sleep, they gave me clothes because I had no warm clothes. They are helping me here. I feel there's help now.”

Asylum seeker from Togo



support

“I have been most impressed by the innovative nature of the work of RAP and by their depth of knowledge and commitment. The high quality service they provide for refugees and asylum seekers at a point when they are most vulnerable and isolated cannot be underestimated. RAP’s student placements and related teaching provide an excellent basis for learning and understanding of complex issues.”

Clare Grasham

Senior Lecturer and Practice Development
Tutor, Social Work, Buckinghamshire
Chilterns University College



diversity

Anwar Mohammed is one of many refugee members of staff at RAP.

He arrived in the UK in 1982 – when there was no specialist arrivals project to offer help. His experiences in Iraq had left him seriously ill, and he was admitted to hospital. He stayed with a friend, feeling lost and confused. Gradually he started to work.

In 1991 he got a job with RAP. He went on to set up our Amigos volunteering scheme and, through the years, has been able to study for an MA in Operations Management, supported by RAP. He is now Head of Operations, and a member of the senior management team. “My experience was hard enough,” he says, “but I know that for others arriving today it is even harder. RAP is a wonderful organisation to work for because we combine a unique blend of empathy and professionalism to help people at a time of great need.”



DIVERSITY

RAP staff, volunteers and interpreters come from a wide range of backgrounds. We benefit from an unusually strong mix of experience and professionalism. Our staff come from more than 30 countries, and this enables us to draw on language skills, cultural knowledge and awareness of international issues. Many are themselves refugees.

We believe in investing in our staff. Many are already highly qualified when they join us, but we also encourage staff to take up training that will strengthen their work skills and help with their development. Our staff also offer training to other organisations, on cultural awareness and different asylum issues.

Communicating clearly

Communication is a growing area of expertise for us. Based at various sites, with a multi-lingual client group, we have to be efficient and effective in this area.

A full-time interpreting co-ordinator works to ensure we have skilled language support. We have a core group of qualified interpreters who have extensive experience of how RAP works and the service we offer. Between them they cover the main languages spoken by our clients, and have knowledge of medical terminology, vocabulary relating to asylum and other relevant areas. We offer all our interpreters training in specialist areas such as child protection.

Increasingly, we are talking to the media and a wide range of other organisations about our work and asylum issues in general. In 2004 we played an active part in Refugee Week, emphasising the many positive aspects of welcoming refugees to this country.

Staff ethnicity

RAP staff come from more than 30 countries, including:

Afghanistan	India	Portugal
Britain	Iran	Russia
Colombia	Iraq	Somalia
Czech Republic	Kenya	Spain
Democratic Republic of Congo	Kurdistan	Sudan
Eritrea	Macedonia	Sweden
Ethiopia	Nigeria	Turkey
France	Pakistan	Uganda
Ghana	Palestine	Vietnam
	Poland	Yugoslavia

Languages spoken by RAP interpreters and staff

Albanian	Kurdish	Slovak
Amharic	Lingala	Somali
Arabic	Luganda	Spanish
Cantonese	Macedonian	Swedish
Czech	Mandarin	Tamil
Dari	Pashtu	Tigrinya
English	Polish	Turkish
Fante	Portuguese	Ukrainian
Farsi	Punjabi	Urdu
French	Runyoro	Vietnamese
Hindi	Russian	Yoruba
Kiswahili	Serbo-Croat	
Konkani	Singalese	

ENERGY

Supporting children and young people

Children and young people are among our most vulnerable clients. RAP has specialist staff in place to give families and young people additional guidance and support.

Sometimes we have more than 100 separated young people in our temporary accommodation, while others are based in the community and visit us for help. They struggle with loneliness, and lack the presence of adults to help them understand and cope with their new situation. Some are homeless, some have special needs, many have suffered trauma and loss.

Our Child and Family Welfare Adviser, the Young Person's Adviser, and other staff are on hand to work with children and young people. The Child and Family Welfare Adviser, an experienced social worker, supervises social work students at RAP, and links with a number of training institutions and colleges. Staff and interpreters have had training in child protection issues.

In addition to the one to one support we offer, in 2004 we set up a young people's activity group to provide opportunities for friendship, fun and advice. The response of the young people has been fantastic. The group brings them together once a week with skilled and supportive adults.

Another important area of work is with young people who are initially assessed by Social Services or the Immigration Service as over 18 years old, but who claim they are younger than this. We help them go through a second age assessment. Many are found to be under 18. Where there is a dispute, we help the young person secure legal representation.

Marie is a single parent with three children under four years old. Since fleeing Cameroon she was struggling to cope. RAP made sure she had appropriate accommodation, and referred her to the local social services department for support. She was then knocked down by a car. She tried to tell the police where her children were but spoke little English. It took the police two hours to track down her children.

RAP's Family Welfare Adviser was alerted. She went to the children, and met the police. She and the police took the children to a foster family, where she helped the children settle and briefed the carers. She then spoke to the mother at hospital, with the help of an interpreter.

Once the mother was out of hospital, the Family Welfare Adviser acted as an advocate, securing the return of the children and negotiating greater support. One of RAP's Amigos befrienders is now helping the family.



“The RAP Adviser helps me.
She's the one who takes care of me.
School... solicitor... anything that
bothers me I can talk to her about.”


Young woman from Afghanistan

“I was 16 when I arrived.
I knew no one. I was put in one
detention centre after another.
My solicitor got me out and sent
me to RAP. Now I have food, a bed,
advice. I've started school. I've got
new friendships.”

Young man from Cameroon



energy



“Interpreting is a very important role. Getting things wrong could have terrible consequences for RAP’s clients. So you are always learning.”

Nahid
Iranian interpreter

care



CARE

Helping the most vulnerable

Some of our clients face particular hardships and challenges when they seek asylum in the UK. Torture survivors, people with serious illnesses, families and women are among those who need additional help. Many of the women we work with have been raped or have suffered some form of sexual violence. Some have experienced domestic violence – this may continue after arrival in the UK. A significant number of the children have special needs.

RAP has a team specialising in helping people who are particularly vulnerable, and we have developed expertise in areas such as special accommodation, links to appropriate mental health services, and a range of other support.

Through partnership working we are developing the range of services on offer to women and children. RAP has linked up with Hounslow Primary Care Trust to run a weekly drop in group for pregnant women and mothers with children under five. Run by a health visitor, the group talks about health issues, and there is help for women who need to see a doctor or go to hospital. The children have a play session. Friendships have grown up among the women, many of whom are very isolated.

Some of our most vulnerable clients may not be dispersed. They move into the local community, where we can continue to provide them with support.

Running the Gateway Protection Programme

RAP is involved in running a reception and orientation service for refugees arriving as part of the government's Gateway Protection Programme. Through the scheme, people in refugee camps overseas are screened and granted refugee status prior to arrival in the UK. A RAP team meets the refugees as they come off the plane, ensures they have warm clothing, checks their documents and gives them a short advice session. We deal with any immediate needs they may have, and get them to their temporary accommodation which is where a partner organisation provides orientation. After a few days we escort the refugees to the resettlement area, where longer term reception facilities have been set up for them.

This project is run in partnership with the British government, UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration, the International Rescue Committee and other refugee agencies.

Mohammed is an Algerian asylum seeker in his 50s. He fled from his home because of the political crisis in his country, and applied for asylum in the UK. RAP helped him fill in the forms for basic support, and provided short-term accommodation.

Mohammed was depressed and very anxious. While waiting for the result of his application, he was diagnosed with mental illness. He was admitted to the West Middlesex hospital where he received psychiatric treatment. While he was there, RAP's special support team took part in the case conference at the hospital to help set up a care plan for our client after release. RAP, Hounslow Social Services and the hospital entered into joint care responsibilities.

On release, we continued to provide accommodation and support, and Mohammed's mental health gradually improved.

Amigos, RAP's volunteer befriending scheme for asylum seekers and refugees, is one of the longest-established of its kind in the UK. As a result, we have built up a constantly developing bank of volunteers whom we match with our most vulnerable clients. They offer at least four hours practical and emotional support a week for a few months to newly-arrived asylum seekers, helping them understand the UK system and access classes and services.

We have a well-designed selection and orientation process for new volunteers. In 2005 we are getting our customised training accredited so that volunteers get maximum benefit from taking part and so we guarantee high standards. The training includes an overview of immigration and asylum law, an introduction to the mental well-being of refugees, the Human Rights Act and an introduction to counselling skills.

Volunteering and support groups

In 2004 we set up our first support groups, bringing together clients with staff and specially-trained volunteers. The RAP Young People's Activity Group offers support and friendship to young people, and has proved hugely popular among young people in our accommodation and those based in the community.

We have also set up a women's support group which meets one night a week, offering friendship and advice to asylum seekers. Our volunteers also help at a group run by health visitors for pregnant women and mothers of young children in our accommodation.

Group work has enabled us to be more efficient in making use of volunteers' time. Now, if a group of young people want to enrol at the same college, one volunteer can take them all along (instead of each being accompanied one to one). The groups also strengthen self-help and support networks among the young people and women.

Sophie is a volunteer with Amigos. She befriends a young woman – Nadine – who arrived from Burundi several months pregnant, along with a toddler who is her nephew, and who has lost one of his parents.

Sophie helped Nadine fill in forms, book appointments, and go to visit health services, colleges, the local authority and other organisations. She helped her prepare for the birth, and make her flat into a home.

When Nadine gave birth to her son, Sophie was present. "His birth was seriously exhausting, but it was sensational and very moving as well," says Sophie. "In the months before there were very difficult moments and I greatly admired Nadine's dignified sadness. I am grateful to Nadine for what she has shared with me, and all I have learnt."





“You get real satisfaction when you help someone feel good about themselves and be more independent.”

Brenda

Amigos volunteer

“I wanted to be there for someone when they're frightened and vulnerable. I'm not an expert, but through the training I know I can help people with the basics. And I'm learning so much from the person I've befriended, about a country that before I'd barely heard of.”

Lucy

Amigos volunteer

commitment

During the period 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005, the Refugee Arrivals Project received 4,054 referrals and completed 3,759 NASS applications.

Number of NASS Applications				
Country	Female	Male	Total	%
Iran	146	417	563	15%
Somalia	191	212	403	11%
Pakistan	208	174	382	10%
Afghanistan	110	108	218	8%
Iraq	23	191	214	6%
Eritrea	79	92	171	5%
D.R. Congo	77	91	168	4%
Sudan	30	105	135	3%
Zimbabwe	69	61	130	3%
Turkey	58	54	112	2%
Liberia	36	65	101	2%
Other countries (82)	498	664	1162	31%
Totals	1525	2234	3759	100%

Length of Stay with RAP (snapshot, 31st March 2005)		
Duration	Total People	%
1 week or less	58	8%
1 to 2 weeks	66	10%
2 to 4 weeks	122	17%
More than 4 weeks	462	65%
Totals	708	100%

Breakdown of Applications by Age				
Age group	Female	Male	Total	%
1 – 17	480	564	1044	28%
18 – 24	294	615	909	24%
25 – 34	450	708	1158	31%
35 – 64	255	305	560	15%
Age less than 1	30	27	57	1%
Age over 65	16	15	31	1%
Totals	1525	2234	3759	100%

Breakdown of Applications by Household			
Status	Number of Cases	Total People	%
Couple (no children)	70	140	4%
Family	195	739	20%
Minor (age dispute)	220	224	6%
Single 25 and over	1107	1107	29%
Single parent	307	788	21%
Single under 25	761	761	20%
Totals	2660	3759	100%

statistics

year ending 31st March 2005

Breakdown of Referrals by Source

Referred by Name	Individuals	Families	Total
Heathrow Airport	1121	312	1433
Self / Walk-in	442	193	635
Refugee Council (London)	283	266	549
Gatwick Airport	247	67	314
Eaton House Immigration Service	267	34	301
Oakington Detention Centre	145	27	172
Thames Valley Police	127	23	150
Stansted Airport	110	25	135
Migrant Helpline	48	21	69
Social Services Department	17	42	59
Other Police (not Thames Valley)	45	4	49
Solicitors	22	5	27
Bail for Immigration Detainees	13	1	14
One Stop Services	10	4	14
Luton Airport	9	1	10
Other	92	31	123
Totals	2998	1056	4054

Breakdown of Referrals Main Applicant Female

Status Name	Number of Cases	Total People	%
Couple (no children)	11	22	1%
Family	115	412	18%
Minor (age dispute)	82	86	4%
Single 25 and over	476	476	21%
Single parent	386	988	43%
Single under 25	289	289	13%
Totals	1359	2273	100%

Breakdown of Referrals by Household

Status Name	Number of Cases	Total People	%
Couple (no children)	88	176	3%
Family	278	1051	19%
Minor (age dispute)	276	280	5%
Single 25 and over	1831	1831	33%
Single parent	414	1053	19%
Single under 25	1167	1167	21%
Totals	4054	5558	100%

Breakdown of Referrals Main Applicant Male

Status Name	Number of Cases	Total People	%
Couple (no children)	77	154	5%
Family	165	643	20%
Minor (age dispute)	194	194	6%
Single 25 and over	1353	1353	41%
Single parent	27	63	1%
Single under 25	878	878	27%
Totals	2694	3285	100%

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2004

incorporating the income and expenditure statement

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Total 2004 £	Total 2003 £
Incoming Resources				
Government and other public authorities:				
Home Office	14,364,187		14,364,187	12,932,516
Association of London Government	13,260		13,260	58,040
Community Fund	80,593		80,593	76,786
Trust Funding	68,522		68,522	62,510
Donations	2,139	300	2,439	8,102
Interest receivable	7,118	52,089	59,207	39,723
Total Incoming Resources	14,535,819	52,389	14,588,208	13,177,677
Resources Expended				
Activities in furtherance of Objects				
Emergency payments fund	10,218,295		10,218,295	10,821,240
Refugee Arrivals Service	2,752,269	77,553	2,829,822	2,423,446
Planning and Development Project			0	78,533
Volunteer Befriending Scheme	90,391		90,391	85,198
Young Separated Refugees Project	41,588		41,588	38,940
Management and Administration	49,659		49,659	50,805
Gateway Protection Programme	30,748		30,748	
Mental Wellbeing Project	28,318		28,318	
Child and Family Welfare	23,156		23,156	
Total Resources Expended	13,234,424	77,553	13,311,977	13,498,162
Net incoming resources	1,301,395	-25,164	127,6231	-320,485
Transfers between funds	-33,123	33,123		
Net movement of funds in the year	1,268,272	7,959	1,276,231	
Opening fund balances at 1 April	260,683	151,092	411,775	732,260
Closing balances at 31 March	1,528,955	159,051	1,688,006	411,775

Trustees' statement

The summarised accounts set out here have been extracted from the full annual accounts prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985, which were approved by the Trustees on 17 September. The full annual accounts have been audited and the auditors' opinion was unqualified. The accounts have been delivered to the Registrar of Companies and the Charity Commission.

Dr Girma Ejere, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Further information

These summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. For further information, the full annual accounts, the auditors' report on these accounts and the Trustees' annual report should be consulted. Copies of these can be obtained from the Finance Manger, Refugee Arrivals Project, 41b Cross Lances Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW3 2AD, telephone 020 8607 6934

“All I could think about was what happened to me. I still get a lot of physical pain. RAP is helping me to get treatment. Without them, we would be alone.”

Newly-arrived single mother, from Congo



finance

Statement of reserves

We value highly the security provided by the government grants we receive, and we will seek to maintain this important source of funding. We are also mindful that a healthy agency must have diverse sources of income, and we are working hard to increase the number of trusts and other funders who support our work.

Our activities rely on funding over a period of several years to ensure the progressive development of humane and efficient services for new asylum seekers and refugees. By gathering unrestricted reserves, we can commit ourselves to long-term development and protect our work against financial fluctuations.

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2004

	2004 £	2003 £
Fixed assets		
Office Equipment	106,070	150,500
Current Assets		
Debtors and Prepayments	346,739	291,094
Bank and Cash in hand	3,929,323	2,047,329
Total Current Assets	4,276,062	2,338,423
Creditors: Amount falling due within one year	2,694,126	2,077,148
Net Current Assets	1,581,936	261,275
Total Assets less current liabilities	1,688,006	411,775
Capital and Reserves		
Unrestricted funds:		
General fund	52,981	592
Designated Fixed Assets Fund	106,070	150,500
Restricted Funds	1,528,955	260,683
	1,688,006	411,775

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Patrons: **Lord Hylton, Richard Allan MP**

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The British Red Cross Society
United Nations High Commission for Refugees
Amnesty International

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Head of Operations	Anwar Mohammed
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To protect our clients, some details have been changed.

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