

## 2880 FOOD PARCELS

■ In the year to 31.08.06 the food group distributed over 2,880 food parcels and we supported over 100 different refugees every month.

The numbers of refugees using our group have increased over the year from 36 refugees per week at the beginning of the year to 54 refugees per week at the end of the year.

During the winter months the numbers using the group increased to 60-70 refugees per week and in early March 2006, 75 refugees attended (our highest so far).

This has increased our weekly shopping bill and we now spend between £220 and £270 per week. Giving annual cost of over £12,000. (approx cost per person of the food distributed was £4.38)

## Campaigning

NNRF has been supporting the Living Ghosts campaign organised by Church Action on Poverty [www.churchpoverty.org.uk/campaigns/LivingGhosts](http://www.churchpoverty.org.uk/campaigns/LivingGhosts). They have been raising the profile of destitute asylum seekers, and earlier in the year 45 church leaders signed a statement in support of the campaign. In the first week of March, church members in Nottingham took up the challenge to live on £5 a week and a bag of food in support of the campaign.

Refugee Action is currently in the process of an important piece of research on destitution among asylum seekers. They are interviewing over 100 people to explore both the impact of destitution on these individuals and also the extent to which they are destitute because of a lack of good legal advice. About 15-20 people were interviewed in Nottingham.

For a long time, none of the national organisations seemed to be giving much attention to the people who were made destitute at the end of the asylum process, but this has recently changed, with the Refugee Council also beginning to argue for a right to work for asylum seekers.

Denying people the means to support themselves is a deliberate policy of government to try to force the return of asylum seekers who have been refused – even when their countries are still patently not safe to return to, or when their own personal circumstances mean that they would face persecution or great hardship. This has included countries like Sudan, Zimbabwe and Iraq. Even the safety net of Section 4 support is only available to a minority and in order to obtain it, people must sign to agree to co-operate with their return to the country they have fled. (Section 4 support, also known form of help offering basic accommodation and food vouchers. There is no cash at all, so no money for transport. Only those who fulfil certain criteria can obtain it, so it is not available to every refused asylum applicant.) The Government's policies appear to be driven by media pressure and the desire to appear tough on asylum. There has been a huge amount of legislation on asylum in an attempt to tighten the screws even further.

NNRF has begun to explore a campaign on the right to work for asylum seekers, and hopes to link up with other organisations. In June, Liz Fekete from the Institute of Race Relations spoke at a meeting at the Square Centre as part of Refugee Week and her view is that while local actions can be extremely effective, it is a nationally unified campaign which is most needed to ensure that protest at these policies is sufficiently loud that it can change policy.

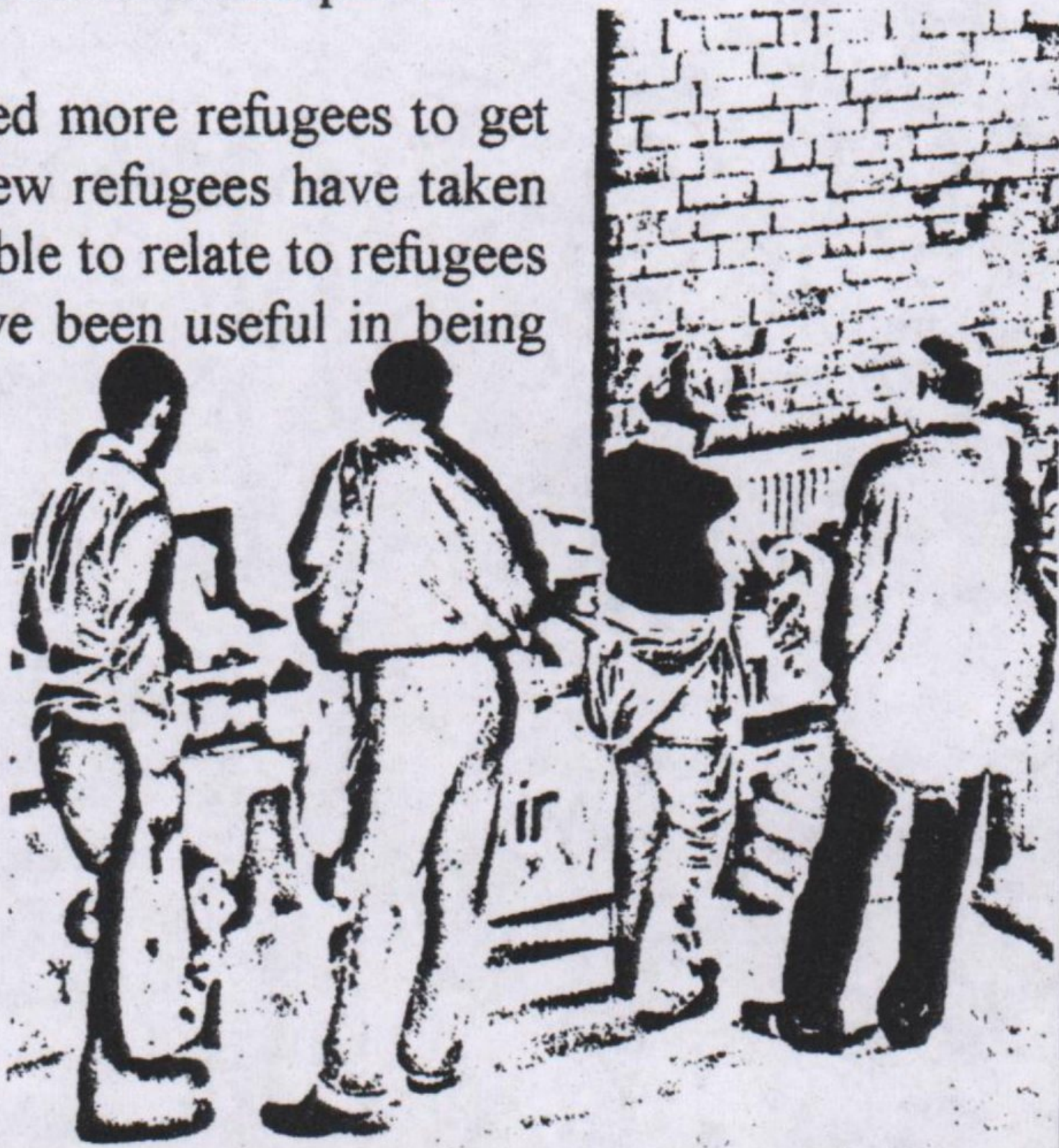
## VOLUNTEERING WITH THE FOOD GROUP

■ I am a food group volunteer and I help distribute the food on Saturdays and have done this since the destitution group moved to its present location at the Square Centre in June 2005. The volunteering is enjoyable and I have met many interesting people from different countries and backgrounds. As well as giving out food there are computers for refugees to use and board games and refreshments to promote social interaction. The refugees get the opportunity to meet new people in a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere.

Over the last year we have encouraged more refugees to get involved, as volunteers and quite a few refugees have taken us up on this offer. They have been able to relate to refugees from their own communities and have been useful in being able to communicate with some of the refugees who do not have fluent English.

We are always looking for new volunteers. No special qualifications or skills are needed, just a willingness to work in a welcoming way with people who are destitute and have endured many hardships.

Frank



## FREE SHOP

■ Leading up to the winter last year, we organised an appeal for good quality warm clothing and bedding. We received loads of coats, jumpers, scarf's, gloves hats, t-shirts, duvets, blankets etc. We then set up a weekly Saturday morning stall at the forum and distributed the clothes free of charge to refugees that attended the food distribution.

During the spring and summer, we were able to use the stall to distribute surplus household goods donated.

Over the year we've given out bikes, microwaves, TV's, pushchairs, suit cases, shopping trolleys and 50 hot water bottles.

We've also been able to support families with babies and young children by regularly putting out appeals for essential items such as clothing, pushchairs, cots etc.

## SATURDAY HOT FOOD

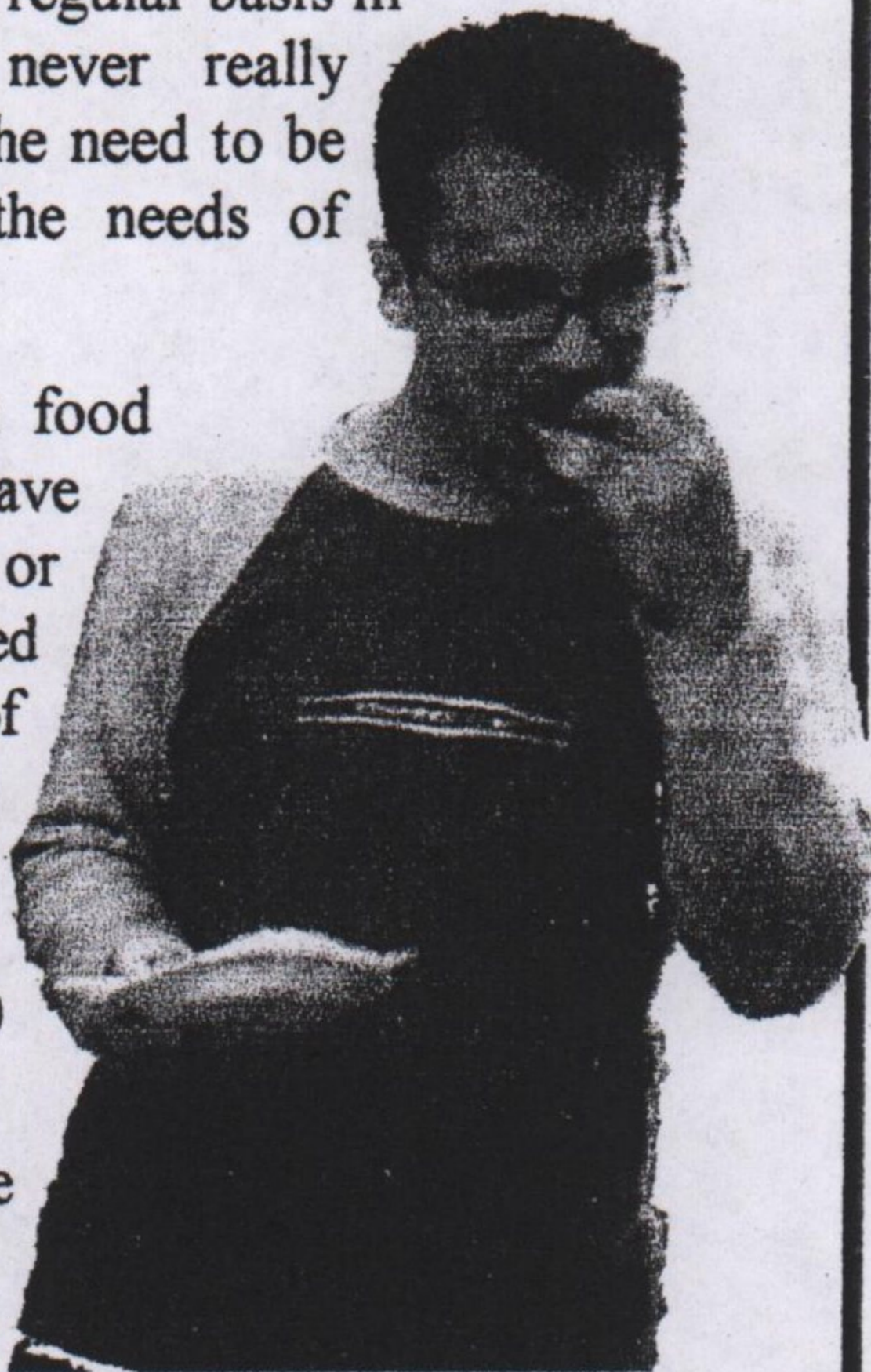
■ The decision to serve hot food was informed by the need to make people feel as welcome as possible at the Food Group. We were also aware that some people are genuinely hungry and in that sense serving food is also very functional. We have continued, and will continue to think about how to involve people whom wish to be involved from the various Refugee and Asylum Seeker communities in the cooking etc of food.

We began serving cooked food on Saturdays on a regular basis in March 06. Previously staffing levels have never really permitted this. We were aware from the off for the need to be culturally sensitive in order to accommodate the needs of various different religious groups.

However the decision to only serve vegetarian food does in some senses make this easier. So far we have served up quick things, which can be taken away or eaten whilst on the move, including toasted sandwiches, pizza, garlic bread, melon. All of which seem very popular. We are constantly trying to think of other things but are aware of the need to keep the costs low. Most weeks the food very popular and it's estimated that about 35-40 people usually eat something.

It is surely now only a matter of time before the cook is head hunted by a top restaurant.

Jo



## ACCOMMODATION

■ When asylum applicants are refused and come to the end of their case, they not only have their money stopped by NASS (the National Asylum Support Service), but also lose their accommodation and their right, for the most part, to free health care. Most people in this situation live with friends, usually sleeping on the floor, often having to move frequently from one house to another. Some have had to live rough. There is little that we can do to help, but there have been a couple of new initiatives, which do or will offer a place to stay to a few of those affected.

The first of these is a squat which is currently supports 5-6 destitute women refugees. Also next year Southwell Diocese will be donating a house, which is to be used for destitute asylum seekers, probably pregnant women and others who may be particularly vulnerable.



■ During the year the Destitution Group have helped several hundred refugees from over 30 countries including:-Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, China, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Israel, Kenya, Kosovo, Liberia, Malawi, Moldova, Mongolia, Nigeria, Palestine, Romania, Serbia, Somali, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda, Zimbabwe

## HARVEST FESTIVAL APPEAL

In a bid to try to counteract the massive rise in expenditure last summer we decided to launch a Harvest Festival Appeal to Local Churches and Infant & Junior Schools within the City.

We received a very positive, generous response to our letters and emails and many organisations were more than happy to help, and to see their collected food going somewhere where it was most definitely needed. We had several requests for speakers for School Assemblies and Harvest Celebration Services at Church, where we were very well received and able to explain and publicise the work of the Forum to a wide cross-section of the community, hopefully dispelling some of the myths along the way.

We were really amazed by the generosity of the City's people and received over £2,000 worth of food donations, as well as cash kindly collected in Church plate collections, and we also welcomed several new volunteers and members too!

The food donated was very well received by our Asylum Seekers who for once had some new, much needed variety to their diets – including a plentiful supply of fresh Pumpkin – which took a bit of explaining!

We are about to launch 2006's appeal and would like to thank all those that helped out last year, especially those that gave talks, collected huge quantities of groceries, or helped sort and date check the food before distribution, and would welcome all offers of help we can get for this year's appeal.

Let The Pumpkins Roll Again....

**Heather**

**Buy.at/nnrf** is a fund-raising opportunity for NNRF. It gives access to loads of high-street and big name retailers, where you might be doing your shopping anyway. But if you do your buying through **Buy.at/nnrf**, you will be raising funds for NNRF. Go to <http://www.buy.at/nnrf> and click onto the retailer's logo (or search for products). Then any purchases you

make will generate a percentage for NNRF Destitution Group. NNRF is constantly seeking standing orders and one-off donations to fund this work (if you do not already donate, please consider doing so), but there is unfortunately still a discrepancy between income and outgoings, because of the large number of people we are helping. Cutting back on the meagre

£2.50 + two bags of food we can give out weekly would be a terrible course of action, but the only other option is to increase our income.

Using <http://www.buy.at/nnrf> means you can generate extra income for this valuable work, without it costing you an extra penny. We have been told that there may occasionally be special offers, so you could even save yourself money.