

Comment

Living on a financial knife-edge is common for a small charity. Grants are time-limited, and the priorities of funding bodies can change annually. Paradoxically, it can be easier to raise money for a shiny new project than it can for provision that has been working successfully for several years.

Grant makers must of course ensure that the money in their trust is spent with care, but this short-term approach can have disastrous effects on the charities concerned.

There are other factors. Asylum seekers who have just arrived in the country are usually dispersed to other areas of the UK. But for our families being frequently moved around from one (often inadequate) home to another, starting at possibly the fifth school in a couple of years, brings its own challenges.

At Salusbury WORLD we are ready to help our families move forward in whatever way is most helpful to them, but we want to be able to work according to our agreed priorities, whether they are prioritised by funders or not.

For this we need an income that we can rely on for more than a couple of years.

We have raised some money from the sales of our book and through our training programme. Now we have launched the Friends Scheme hoping to generate an unrestricted and reliable income.

While doing so, we aim to share with our supporters some of the trials and the joys of our work, and to introduce you to some of the very remarkable people we have been privileged to work with. By sharing some of their stories, hopes and enthusiasms, we seek to move the asylum debate away from statistics, and back to real people – people who just happened to be in a difficult place at a difficult time.

From our case book

(We have changed the names to protect their privacy)

In 1999 war was raging in Kosova. The Berisha family (mother, father and children aged 13, 15 and 18), were caught in the middle. They were evacuated to London and given Exceptional Leave to Remain* for a year, at the end of which it was anticipated that the war would be over and they could return home.

The family quickly made efforts to establish a normal life in the UK: the children attended school and college and endeavoured to recover from their experiences. The youngest was the most severely affected: a withdrawn and unhappy girl who received regular counselling sessions.



The war dragged on and many more Kosovans fled the atrocities taking place at home. The Berisha's Leave to Remain expired and they were awarded an extension for another year.

But now, as a result of slipshod legal advice and the sheer volume of cases from 1999 and 2000, their immigration case somehow disappeared from Home Office records.

Their status became unclear so employers would not take the risk of giving them work (refugees are allowed to work, asylum seekers are not). Without clarity they were likewise ineligible for benefits. They were trapped: unable to work and unable to return to Kosova.

They were supported by generous friends and relatives

for 18 months, while we tried to untangle their case. Then we heard about the Government Amnesty aimed at clearing the backlog of similar cases. It was clear that the family qualified. We helped them to find a good solicitor: they applied and were successful.

Shortly afterwards, their benefits were restored, the older children (now adults) returned to work and the youngest is now a first year university student.

This timid, traumatised 13 year old has become the principal advocate for the family and this year received her British citizenship, along with her brother and sister.

Her parents though are still suffering. The effects from the war are long-lasting and have left them with physical and emotional scars which make it impossible to learn sufficient English to become UK citizens.

In the spring, we were able to secure them temporary travel documents to enable them to return to Kosova to say goodbye a dying relative, but it is unlikely that they will ever be able to become fully British.

Their children, however, are putting the past far behind them and making ambitious plans for a successful future.

* Exceptional Leave to Remain: a decision from the Home Office until April 2003, giving permission to stay in the country for three years or less if it was felt that it would be too dangerous to return home.

We believe that *all* children

- are of equal worth, wherever and in whatever circumstances they were born
- have an equal right for their innate abilities, talents, hopes and potential for achievement to be nurtured
- have an equal right to enjoy their childhood

Did you know?

Marks and Spencer, Burtons, Tilda Rice, Thorn EMI, Saatchi and Saatchi, and Patak foods were all founded by refugees or their children