

UWRSG and coronavirus

Inevitably, there has been a hiatus in our activities in recent months due to Coronavirus. We would normally be planning refugee visits to the dale, be collecting household goods and preparing for refugee week as part of Grassington Festival. None of these will be going ahead this year and the money we raised in January to support visits to the dale has now been sent to the Bradford food bank.

But need continues, even if unseen by us locked away up here. We asked BIASAN about the changing needs of refugees in Bradford as a result of the virus and how we might be able to help.

English lessons. Prior to the outbreak, English lessons were provided on a group basis twice a week – you may remember that it was this group that produced the 'thank-you' banner. English lessons are now being undertaken by seven volunteers via Zoom. This is working well except that the cost of the phone data is prohibitive for many or lessons have to be abandoned as the monthly data allowance runs out. BIASAN would like to purchase phone data on behalf of refugees to enable learning to continue.

BIASAN as a meeting point has had to close. The language classes, women's group and more general 'drop in' were the means through which pressing need was identified and responded to. This is more difficult now but there are still volunteers in contact with refugees and need has not reduced.

Hunger and access to healthier food remains a particular problem, particularly as the food banks are struggling to meet the current high demand. BIASAN provide food directly to those most in need via 'food drops' (primarily men without an income living in hostels) and cash 'top ups' to help families with the high cost of supermarket shopping in lock down. During lock-down, UWRSG is unable to deal with food donations for BIASAN and so we are asking people for financial help instead. **For donations to BIASAN** please get in touch with Richard on 01756 770346 strand@hawkswick.net

Life for many under lock-down is very lonely and isolated, and especially so for refugees. **Radios** provide a link to the outside world and the sound of human voices. Additionally, **magazines**, especially women's magazines, are valued, both as an aid to language learning and providing something to read. If you have any radios or magazines please get in touch with Stella stella@stellaperrott.com and she will pass them on.

Refugees worldwide

Coronavirus has already had an impact on our Upper Wharfedale community. Many have lost a family member or good friend. Others have been ill but have recovered, sometimes at considerable cost to longer term well being. All of us are physically distancing and curtailing social and other activities. In times like this it is difficult to look beyond our immediate social or family circle and think about those much further away who still need our help and attention.

On behalf of UWRSG Stella Perrott wrote a piece for Yorkshire Bylines about the risks of coronavirus in refugee camps [Refugees at the Mercy of Covid-19](#) in order to draw attention to the plight of refugees beyond our borders.

[Yorkshire Bylines](#) is a *free* new on-line newspaper for Yorkshire, primarily covering news and current affairs. Stella will be writing a further piece in the next couple of weeks on refugees in Yorkshire so do subscribe to the paper and get an alert on this when it is published.

Christian Aid Week

In Yorkshire Bylines article there are links to organisations that support refugees. Additionally, this week is Christian Aid Week (supporting refugees of all faiths and none) and Upper Wharfedale Churches Together are organising a 'virtual coffee' morning to raise funds for and this will replace the annual door-to-door envelope collection. If you would like to support refugees through this route a just giving fund raising page has been set up on.

https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/upperwharfedalechurchestogetherchristianaidgroup?utm_source=Sharethis&utm_medium=fundraising&utm_content=upperwharfedalechurchestogetherchristianaidgroup&utm_campaign=pdf-email&utm_term=593eddac408a403c987fa4e5c67471b5

Who are we?

The **Upper Wharfedale Refugee Support Group** comprises a network of individuals living in Upper Wharfedale and Littondale who are concerned for refugees and wish to help in some way.

We fundraise, donate clothing and household items, welcome refugees, write to/ lobby elected representatives and provide factual information. If you have an activity or an event you would like to suggest or would like some help with, or you would like to be included on our mailing list, email us at: refugees@upperwharfedale.net