

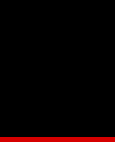
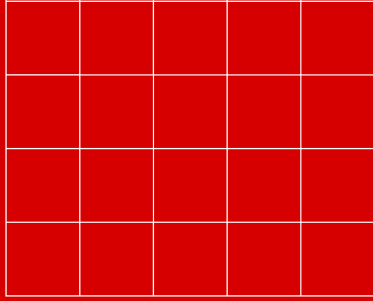
# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



## London Churches Refugee Fund

Charity Number  
1121108

[www.lcrf.org.uk](http://www.lcrf.org.uk)



# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear friends,

“Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;

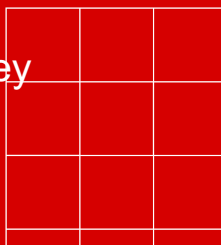
Lord, hear my voice; let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.” (Psalm 130 v 1,2)

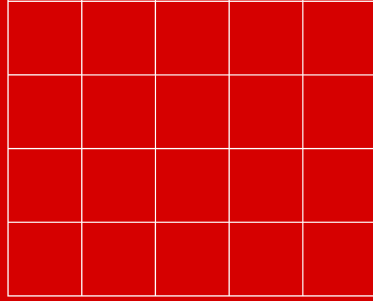
On my way to work, one cold winter morning years ago, as I was exiting Pimlico station I encountered a gentleman who was obviously homeless, inadequately dressed for the time of year, and suffering badly from the cold. Instinctively I took off my much loved, and very warm, Harris Tweed sports jacket and handed it to him. I’m not sure which of the two of us was more surprised! But the shivering man grasped the jacket gladly, and wrapped it around his freezing body.

At the time I was reading a biography of Saint Francis of Assisi, and it may well have been his spirit that inspired this spontaneous act of kindness to a stranger in need.

It was around this time (2006) that I helped to set up the London Churches Refugee Fund (LCRF). And since then the twice yearly grants that LCRF makes to numerous refugee projects in London have provided not only warm clothing, but travel and phone cards, nappies, sanitary packs, food vouchers, and emergency payments for thousands of destitute refugees and migrants across London - and today the need has never been greater.

No matter how these desperate people reach the shores of the United Kingdom, whether they are ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’, whether they are fleeing violence and oppression, or “simply” in search of a life worth living, if they are destitute, the London Churches Refugee Fund is there to help them as they “cry to us out of the depths”.





Jesus always respected the dignity of every individual he met, however, much they might be condemned, or rejected by society... the lives of the woman caught in adultery, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man born blind, were all transformed by their encounter with Jesus. And he never stopped to ask if they had reached him through official government safe routes, or were smuggled into his presence on a boat across the Sea of Galilee, or under straw hidden in a donkey cart. And he certainly never sent them on a one-way flight to Rwanda, insisting that they apply to him for help from there. And neither do we. We just try to help them, right where they are, in London.

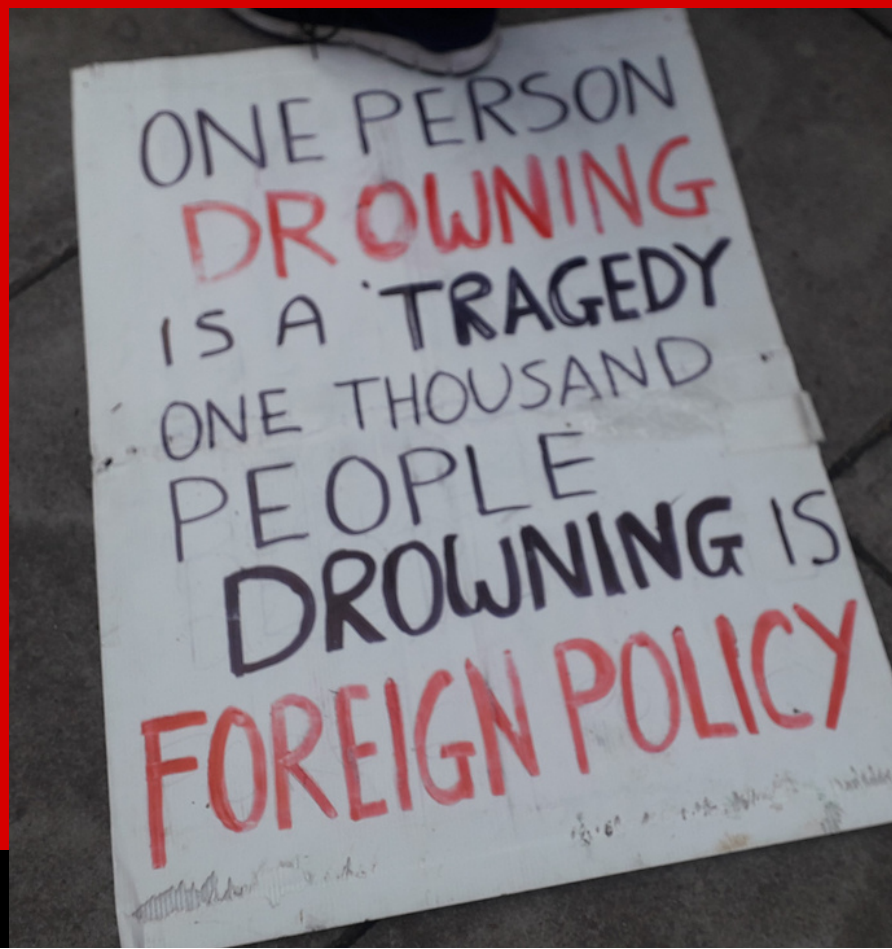
Thank you for your amazing support that makes all this possible. We hope you will be encouraged and inspired by all that you read in this year's Annual Report. Please share the good news of what we have achieved with your friends, family and colleagues ....and ask them to join us!

With my love, and prayers, and heartfelt thanks,

Chris

Revd Chris Brice

Chair of LCRF



# THE BIGGER PICTURE

Gillian Dare, LCRF Trustee

Seeking asylum is a human right”.

This year has seen ever growing numbers of people forced to flee their homes from war, drought and famine caused by climate change, often exacerbated by land seizures by commercial enterprises, violence especially against women, children and young people increasingly in response to persecution for their religious beliefs. The individual motivations which drive people to undertake perilous voyages and suffer privations, slavery and violence along the way are complex and we need to deepen our understanding in order to empathise with them and show compassion for our brothers and sisters. These are people like us not statistics. People who lived normal lives going to school or work, cultivating their land to feed their families, marrying and having children until disasters not of their making, struck them and their communities.

Sadly development funds which were established by the wealthier countries and international agencies, which were intended to strengthen communities in the poorer countries and enhance their ability to withstand such shocks and grow their economies, have been heavily cut in the last eighteen months and in the UK, the Government admitted to Parliament that it had spent a third of its international aid budget at home last year on refugees, causing “major disruption” to international development, according to the Government’s own independent watchdog’s report. The Government needs to respond to the refugees and asylum seekers and victims of humanitarian crises who make it to Britain, but with the diversion of vital funds meant for tackling the root causes of global poverty and conflict, we are seeing more people fleeing to the wealthier countries.


Our sisters and brothers around the world — including in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Eritrea and both Sudans, Palestine — are daily facing the impact of conflict and food scarcity, as well as climate change, increasing pressure on both the countries from which refugees come and on our own national domestic resources. And as ever, women and children have borne the brunt. In 2021, even before Putin’s war, a report produced by Save the Children found that over 450 million children worldwide (or 1 in 6) were living in a conflict zone, a 5% increase from 2019. While the 2021 statistics show the highest numbers of children in conflict in 20 years, Putin’s war added an extra 7.5 million children to this data according to UNICEF.


Separated refugee children in the UK wherever they come from, are alone and vulnerable. Following questions in Parliament, the Government has admitted that since July 2021, it is housing some 4,600 separated children many under 11 years of age, alone in hotels, making them vulnerable to anyone who wants to prey on them and to organised crime gangs. Every child needs its parents, but thousands of refugee children are struggling to cope on their own – experiencing immense trauma and deteriorating mental health. Many go missing altogether. This is only worsened by being separated from their loved ones, especially when they need them the most. Family separation is incredibly painful at any age, but it's particularly hard for children especially when they know their families are still in danger back home. The UK's harsh rules make it an outlier in Europe. All of our closest neighbours allow separated refugee children to sponsor their parents to join them in safety.

As part of Families Together, a coalition of 100 different organisations, the Refugee Council is calling for a change in the law that would allow separated children to be joined by their families in the UK. Meanwhile, the front-line refugee services to which we contribute are doing all they can to support the children, often playing the role over-stretched local authorities should be fulfilling.

While the eyes of the world have been fixed on Ukraine, other calamities continue to take place. Humanitarian organisations have warned that with attention elsewhere, there is a risk that the cries of millions of marginalised and oppressed people are going unheard, and that many more thousands of people will be forced to flee and fall prey to violent and predatory criminals who lure people with false promises of assistance and security. The situation is worsened in this country as, despite the fact that the Government has increased the numbers of officials dealing with claims, the time taken in dealing with them has increased substantially resulting in more asylum seekers being left destitute for longer.

British Government policies reflect a harsher less compassionate approach to dealing with these desperate people. We have seen the enactment of the Nationality and Borders Act, the policy to send refugees to Rwanda, a country already on watch lists for abuse of human rights, and most recently the new Asylum Bill to stop small boat crossings introduced by the Government which, if passed into law, could become the reality for people who seek protection in the UK.

The Bill seeks to ensure that anyone who arrives on a small boat will have their asylum claim deemed “inadmissible”, meaning that the Home Office won’t even consider someone’s claim. This is despite the fact that two thirds of all people who crossed the Channel last year would have their claim for asylum accepted if their claim was submitted. Everyone arriving on a small boat will be detained and removed. This means people who have committed no crime will be locked up and re-traumatized at a huge cost and despite the lack of space already in detention centres. Nor is there any indication of where they would then be sent.

All this has criminalised refugees and asylum seekers despite being contrary to international law which Britain was the lead country in drafting. Refugee, Asylum and Faith Bodies have all campaigned to persuade the government to provide more accessible safe routes to the UK which would help to reduce the number of people crossing the Channel and reduce the numbers of people drowned. We at London Churches Refugee Fund and our many supporters and partners have signed petitions and written to MPs to ask them to reverse or at least ameliorate these policies, but the Government’s new plan will not give any additional refugees vital access to safe routes.

Faith communities are regularly the first responders when conflicts or emergencies strike and are often the last ones on the ground too, continuing to re-build communities and support those driven from their homes and countries, when governments and non-governmental organizations have dropped out or been overwhelmed. That is why Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders have joined forces to strengthen their shared response to this unprecedented refugee crisis both at home and overseas. A joint pledge arose from the Global Refugee Forum in 2019 to step up interfaith co-operation to enhance efforts and take responsibility on the ground.

We can thank God for the many compassionate people who have set up frontline services and work with a deep commitment and often voluntarily with those who make it to our shores. The London Churches Refugee Fund has been proud to support some 40 such services each year in the London region with donations from individual Christians and churches. But our assistance is only a fraction of what is needed to help the most destitute refugees and asylum seekers in our midst. All those working with refugees are calling for an approach that replaces the chaos and cost of what we have now and focuses on compassion and competence.

In the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, we are given principles about how we, his people, are to treat strangers or foreigners. Jesus said “ I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you visited me”—Matthew 25:




# CASE STUDIES


## CASE STUDY 1

A arrived in the UK in 2017 as a very young teenager from Afghanistan. He had become the head of the family when his father was murdered and was coerced by the local Taliban commander into joining their ranks. He witnessed torture and endured harsh conditions, captivity, beatings and forced gun training, all terrifying for anyone to experience, much less someone so young. Eventually he escaped and his mother scraped some money together to help him to flee the country. After a frightening and dangerous journey, he arrived in the UK and was placed in foster care, but when he was age-assessed by the Home Office as over 18, he was abandoned by the local authority and moved to substandard and uninhabitable accommodation at even greater risk. A's mental health deteriorated, compounded by his experiences and trauma, and he attempted to take his own life.

Thankfully, he was referred to the Baobab Centre. He was struggling with poor mental health, grieving for his father and separation from his family. He had little or no trust in adults and was burdened with loneliness, hopelessness and fear. At the Centre he began attending weekly individual psychotherapy and was given real practical help and support with his age dispute and asylum claims. His mental health has improved, and he is noticeably more confident. His English language skills have developed and he is studying for qualifications in plumbing. His development as a young person is back on track and he feels more hopeful about his future.

## CASE STUDY 2

M is from Ghana, living in Home Office accommodation. He has urine incontinence and there is only one toilet separated from his room by stairs. He also walks on crutches, so accessing the toilet is very difficult. He has requested relocation, but while his request is pending, he has run out of disposable urine bottles given to him by the hospital. He only has an ASPEN card and cannot make purchases online. Using Destitution Funds Samphire were able to purchase some reusable urine bottles for him until a GP could authorise an NHS prescription. Samphire are also assisting him to chase up his relocation request.



## CASE STUDY 3

S, from the Gambia, never knew her father and her mother died with HIV when she was eight years old. She went to live with her grandmother in a rural area, and no longer attended school. When she was 18, her grandmother arranged for her to join a man in London. She was kept as a domestic servant and sexually abused. When she became pregnant he became violent towards her and she fled with someone she believed would help. After a short time, she was subject to domestic abuse again and decided to go to the authorities and apply for asylum. She has been moved around regularly and was threatened with dispersal to Scotland. She currently lives with three children in one room and continues to pursue her claim, supported by Lewisham Churches for Asylum Seekers (LewCAS). She makes good use of the travel card funded by LCRF to see her lawyer who is based in Stratford.

## CASE STUDY 4

H fled her country because she was expected to take on the hereditary role of an FGM practitioner which she could not countenance. She was an FGM survivor herself and had lost her sister to FGM. When she came to the Cotton Tree Trust (CTT) she was in great distress, street homeless and without money or any means of support. LCRF's grant enabled CTT to provide food, toiletries and phone top-ups while they found her a place to stay. She is now receiving medical and psychological support there while her claim is processed.



## CASE STUDY 5

The Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE) has been running the JCORE Unaccompanied Minors Project (JUMP) since 2007. G, a young asylum seeker from Sudan, arrived in the UK two years ago. He is currently housed by the Home Office and is a passionate and hard-working college student. The hardship fund met a critical need for mobile data, allowing G to access an online course to train as an interpreter as there is no wi-fi in his hotel. As a result of his journey to the UK, G is able to speak many languages, and this course will help him find employment once he has asylum status. JUMP also provided food vouchers for the summer break when he could not access college meals and could not afford grocery shopping amid rising prices.

## CASE STUDY 6

D, a single mother with four children from Nigeria, applied for asylum a few years ago and has been living in temporary accommodation. Recently she was granted refugee status and was offered permanent unfurnished accommodation. She applied for Universal Credit but her application took a long time to be considered as she did not have a BRP card nor a National Insurance number. With the grant received from LCRF, the African Refugee Community (ARC) were able to provide her with food telephone credit and data (as she needed to be in contact with many agencies), fares and sanitary products. The family greatly appreciated ARC's practical support while waiting for their state benefits; they spent time cooking and eating together, and their confidence and general well-being increased.

Recently D got a job as a cleaner and started to volunteer with ARC, supporting women struggling to integrate due to language barriers and domestic violence. She is now an ARC Champion and offers a few hours a week to visit and support the most vulnerable ones. LCRF's grant had a very positive impact when D was struggling and crying in silence.

# TRUSTEES ACTIVITIES

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This year saw a transition from meetings via Zoom to full in-person meetings usually round the kitchen table at the home of Chris Brice. We held six meetings plus a summer get together with volunteers and spouses. Palissa Ose-Owusu takes care of our social media output and Clement Francis and his wife, Anitha, have been taking on much of the IT, helping us to stay in touch with supporters via the website and mailouts. We thank them for all that they do for LCRF.

During the year we had some unconscious bias training with Sandra Ackroyd and Darnette Whitby-Reid which fed into sessions later in the year with Jack Brooks focussing on our setting of goals for the next few years. We are very grateful to Sandra, Darnette and Jack for giving up their time to help us. One of the goals we decided was essential was to recruit more trustees, hopefully younger and more diverse, especially as we lost three of our trustees: John Murphy, one of the founding trustees, who found that pressure of work with the charity he runs made it difficult to play an active role in LCRF; Onome Ugbeye, who has withdrawn for health reasons; Martin Ashford, who did so much to ensure we were an efficiently-run organisation, has moved to Bristol. We thank them all for their hard work and enthusiasm.

Two of our patrons have also retired, Bishop Jonathan Clark and Baroness Richardson. However Andrew Prasad has now been joined by Shermara Fletcher and Alfred Enoch and we have been seeking further patrons to ensure we can reach out to all Christian denominations.

A number of our trustees have joined others in the monthly vigil outside the Home Office on behalf of asylum seekers. Our speaker meeting in June at St. Martin-in-the-Fields included a clear call from Dr Sam Wells to help displaced people and was well attended. We very much appreciated the hospitality from the team there. Trustees also took bucket collections in Refugee Week.

In addition to the Lent Resources, a major part of the fund-raising directly undertaken by trustees centres around Christmas. We sold around 5,000 Christmas cards this year. Cathy Young designed one of them, following the success of her cards in previous years. We very much appreciate and value her talents. For another card we were able to use an image embroidered by Pari from Iraqi Kurdistan which was part of a competition we ran for refugees. This year we were able to return to Oxford Circus tube station for our marathon carol singing. Thanks to all the musicians and bucket-shakers who came to share in that event. Put Friday 1 December 2023 in your diary for the next one!


# GRANTS 2022

Another record-breaking year! Thanks to our supporters we were able to distribute £52,000 in grants, £8,000 more than in 2021. We helped 40 different agencies working with asylum seekers and refugees in many different parts of Greater London. They are listed below. Many have made regular applications to us but there were some new ones too.

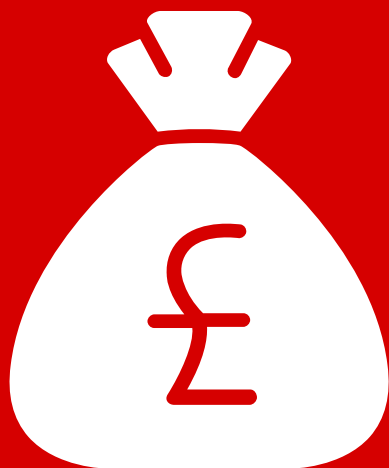
Action for Refugees in Lewisham  
Akwaaba  
African Refugee Community  
Baobab Centre for Young Survivors  
British Red Cross  
CARAS  
C4WS Homeless project  
Centre for Armenian Information and Advice  
Citizens of the World Choir  
Croydon Health Charity  
Croydon Refugee Day Centre  
Communities First Foundation  
Cotton Tree Trust  
Hackney Migrants Centre  
Hackney Night Winter Shelter  
Happy Baby Community  
Haringey Migrants Support Centre  
Hope Church Hounslow  
Hope for the Young  
Housing Justice  
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants  
JCT  
Jewish Council for Racial Equality  
Jesuit Refugee Service  
Lewisham Churches for Asylum Seekers  
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network  
Migrants Organise Ltd  
NNLS Asylum Seekers Drop-In  
Notre Dame Refugee Centre  
Ramfel  
Refugee Action Kingston  
Room to Heal  
St. Martin-in-the-Fields Sunday International Group  
Salisbury World Refugee Centre  
Samphire  
Springboard Academy  
South London Refugee Association  
Waging Peace  
West London Welcome  
Women Against Rape (Asylum from Rape)

Charities interested in applying for grants should see the information on our website at [www.lcrf.org.uk/grants](http://www.lcrf.org.uk/grants) There are two grant meetings per year in May and November. The deadlines for applications are usually April 30 and October 31.


# LCRF ACCOUNTS

A full copy of the audited accounts is available on request

**Income £50,751**



Foundation donors **£17,054**

Single donations **£15,678**

Churches/organisations **£ 6,970**

Card and art print sales **£2,881**

Carol singing **£2,037**

HMRC Gift Aid **£6,131**

And where it went

**Total payments £53,761**

**Grants £52,400**

**Cards p&p £634**

**Administration £727**

**2022 Deficit £3009**



Balance brought forward on January 1, 2022 **£38,183**

Balance carried forward on December 31, 2022 **£35,174**