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# together now

Annual report 2017/18

## Ibrahim's story



Ibrahim's family are being harassed by security forces in their home country. His father was seriously injured in one attack and is being cared for by his wife. Ibrahim's wife and children have been issued with UK entry visas but his father's was denied.

Whilst he makes arrangements for his family to come to the UK he is putting in an appeal to get his father's visa granted. When his wife leaves there will only be a neighbour to care for his father. If they do not come to the UK there is a risk they would not be granted visas again.

When his family arrive they will have nothing to live off for the first few days. The fee to the court is for his father's appeal is just £140 but Ibrahim is already supporting the whole family with his single person's benefit payment.

We were able to help Ibrahim with the appeal fee for his father. With funding from the Cooperative Community Fund we were also able to offer arrival grants of £30 per person to help them through the first few days in the UK.

## Highlights

This year we have continued our relationship with Miles4Migrants and 11 families have travelled through this programme.

With this programme allowing us to provide flights for families we have been able to explore other areas of work. This has included redirecting our income from donations to cases where financial aid rather than a flight is needed.

Developing a structure for our work has given us opportunity to identify areas for improvement and we have successfully applied for a grant to fund a project worker to carry out some evaluation of our activity.

We have also been able to use other grant income to fund specific areas of activity.

We continue to work towards our aim of having reunited 200 families by 2020 and are on track for this target.

This year we reached a key milestone with the arrival of the 100<sup>th</sup> family we've supported.

## Iman's story



Iman himself has health problems including PTSD due to the torture he suffered in Iran and the lack of treatment whilst imprisoned in Europe; 'I'm still thinking about my son and my family all the time.' He's now receiving specialist therapy to help him overcome his problems.

I wish to be with my family as others have the right to live with their family – in safety and security. I cannot return to Iran and they deserve to be with me, the husband and father who loves them.'

Iman's family needed to travel outside Iran for a visa appointment. The worry about how to raise the money to get them there had him hospitalised with a panic attack. As a consequence he borrowed money he couldn't afford to pay back and then was under stress to make repayments.

Part of the money was raised for him by the community where he's now living. Together Now was able to pay the remainder of the money so he doesn't have to cope with additional stress around the debt whilst he continues his therapy.

## Income and expenditure

Total income: £21,612

Total expenditure: £11,548

Restricted income: £21,252

Unrestricted income: £360

Main sources of income:

- Fundraising - £2,796
- Personal donations - £4,351
- Grants - £12,760

This year we've received grants from the following organisation to support our work:

- Coop Community Fund
- Leathersellers Foundation
- Edith Ellis Foundation
- Big Lottery Fund
- Garden Court Chambers

Breakdown of expenditure:

- Case expenditure: £11,548

## Zafeera's story



In Sudan Zafeera studied Business Management and she's now graduated. Her husband Ibrahim worked in a greengrocers 'The same idea as Tesco, Lidl'.

Apart for three years after Ibrahim was forced to flee Sudan the couple kept in touch on the phone and through Facebook and Whatsapp.

We have been a part for over 3 years and it has been so difficult for both of us to be separate but we stayed in touch all the time and finally we are back together again, I am so happy.

When the visa was granted they needed help with travel so Zafeera could enter the UK before her visa expired, he initially found it difficult to get help.

## Need

This year we have been lucky to have obtained grants that, along with flights being booked through our partnership with Miles4Migrants we have generally been able to meet the need.

However we have had enquiries about a few very high cost cases that we have not been able to meet. These are cases where enquirers have generally exhausted all other avenues and we are unable to offer suggestions for other agencies to go to.

We have also seen an increasing trend in families requiring help before they get their visas, for DNA testing, travel to appointment and other essential items, without which it would not be possible to make the visa application.

This has resulted in us covering new parts of the process for the first time including:

- Travel for a mother to go back to Afghanistan after getting her visa converted into a residence permit so she could care for her three young children who's visas were not granted
- Accommodation costs for an unaccompanied minor after his guardian left so he could stay in a city where he could make his visa application and travel to the UK

## Rada's story



In their home country Rada and Mimi worked in a shop. Rada also trained up other staff and drove lorries. They got engaged in 2014 and married the same year.

Rada was detained by the government. After his father paid to get him out he fled. Mimi didn't know he was safe until he was able to call her from the UK.

Whilst he waited for his asylum application to be processed, back home, Mimi was being asked by government officials about the whereabouts of her husband.

Mimi is 'excited and very happy' to be coming to join her husband in England.

Rada says; 'Life was hard before. Now we will have a family and work for the future.'

We're only able to be able to reunite Mimi and Rada through donations made to us. In this case we also appreciate the time taken by an airport chaplain at Heathrow who will help Mimi change planes on her first time flying.

## Our cases

In 2017/18 we supported 37 families in with around 114 people benefiting in total.

Breakdown of cases:

- 18 cases through our travel services with 11 travelling through our partnership with Miles4Migrants.
- 13 families received some form of support prior to their visas being issued. These largely included DNA testing and travel to visa appointments
- 5 families received some additional support with travel costs after their visas were issued, for example with exit visas.
- 3 families received arrival grants to cover immediate costs in the days following their arrival in the UK.

This year we saw most clients coming from Ethiopia, Iran and Sudan.

## Abraham's story



Abraham and his wife Senait met in Sudan, when he came to us they had been apart for three years. When Abraham arrived in the UK he struggled to contact his wife as she'd gone back to her home country.

'It was very difficult, especially for me, because she was pregnant and it is our first child. I dreamt of seeing her whilst she was pregnant and wanted to be there to share her pain when she delivered the baby.'

When Senait and their daughter arrived in the UK it was the first time Abraham had met his two year old daughter.

'I am very happy. Marriage and children are a blessing, a gift from God. No one can give this kind of gift. I am very proud of my family and happy living with them. My wife is also very happy living with me and feels good living in the UK.

Our future is living peacefully and working together. I will help my wife and daughter learn English. At the moment we're living in temporary accommodation but once we find a place they will register at school.'

## Plans for the future

As we work towards our 2020 target of having reunited 200 families we are focused on securing more reliable income streams. This will also mean we are able to meet the growing need from families whose support requirements fall outside the travel provided by our Miles4Migrants partnership.

In 2018/19 we are planning to consolidate the work we've done with grants from smaller funder and use investment from the Awards for All grant to provide an assessment of the inventions we make and produce an evidence base for our work.

We will also build on the success of the art auction held in partnership with the Survivors of Torture Fund and hold another event to meet both fundraising and awareness raising objectives.

## Mark's story



Mark spent two weeks cycling the 1000 miles from John O'Groats to Lands' End to raise money for our work.

In total he's raised over £1,200 which is a really significant contribution to our work.

## Thanks

This year has seen the retirement of one of our founding trustees, Gillian Lester, who has been on our board since 2010. We would like to thank Gill for all the time she's put in over the years and her significant contribution to bringing us to the position we're in today.

We would also like to give thanks to:

- Friends and relatives of clients, who give up their time, day and night to act as interpreters, pass on messages and provide support throughout the process.
- Big Lottery Fund, Coop Community Fund, Edith Ellis Foundation, Garden Court Chambers and Leathersellers Foundation for funding our programmes.
- Steve Burgess for help with accounting.
- Staff from the British Red Cross who have helped us support their clients.
- Everyone who has donated or fundraised on our behalf including Mark Geraghty and 'Into the Gathering Dust'.
- Everyone who helped out with our art auction in November. Through this we raised over £2,600 for our work and the Survivors of Torture Destitution Fund.