

The power of one



Although 28,000 Rohingya live in Bangladesh's two official camps, 200,000 eke out a living outside them



Learning on the edge

Rachel Bentley gives a future to the world's most dispossessed children

MOST PEOPLE HAVE NEVER HEARD OF THE ROHINGYA. Burmese Muslims, they are persecuted in their own country, where minorities face forced labour, rape and torture. Thousands flee to neighbouring

PHOTOGRAPHED BY WILDE FRY



countries—but they're not wanted there either. Last year boatloads were intercepted at sea by the Thai army. After days in outdoor detention they were towed back out, then abandoned with no food, water or motors for their boats. More than 500 died.

But most end up in border refugee camps; they're one of the world's biggest stateless nations. Rachel Bentley, 42, from Sussex, is one of the few Western women to visit the Rohingya in Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh. "When they first crossed the border they lived in the Bangladeshis' villages, alongside them," she says. "Now the authorities force them into these squalid camps where they live in terror of being sent back to Burma."

It's the children, Rachel believes, who suffer the most. Growing up without education they are robbed of any future.

RACHEL'S CHARITY, CHILDREN ON THE EDGE, tries to help, working to build an education system in the border camps. "There are some basic schools set up, but most just teach the Koran. We can go in, under the radar in many cases, and help. If we don't, what hope do they have?"

Rachel's inspiration is Body Shop founder Anita Roddick. She volunteered for Roddick 20 years ago on a team assembled to go and help Romanian orphans—many of whom are now successful adults with educations and jobs. "That's what motivates me," Rachel says. "For the outsider, the person on the edge, you know you can bring that change."

Nick Ryan

Disarming man

What would you do if a man in your pub was carrying a gun?

MATTHEW SMITH'S NICKNAME IS PUTTY,

but he's not soft when it really matters. Wiltshire Police would agree: they recently presented him with a special commendation for bravery.

One autumn day in 2008, ground worker Matthew and his brother were in the beer garden of the Silk Mercer pub in their home town of Devizes. Suddenly, Tim Coombes, a man they vaguely knew, walked over to his ex-girlfriend (who was sitting with another man) and swore at her. Then he went back towards the pub.

The brothers' surprise at the outburst turned to alarm when Coombes raised the back of his jacket—revealing a handgun tucked into his jeans. They slipped inside and told the manager to ring the police.

But Matthew, 37, was worried about what might happen before officers arrived. He had an idea. Casually walking over to the armed man he said, "Hi mate, come over and have a chat." He steered his acquaintance into a small courtyard at the side of the pub garden and started to talk—"just chit-chat about work and



stuff'. After a couple of minutes, he said, "Well, take care, mate," put his arms round Coombes and gave him a hug.

This was his chance. Matthew grabbed the gun out of his acquaintance's trousers. It went off as he threw it away. Then, five-foot-six Matthew wrestled the taller man

to the ground and held him until a police armed-response unit arrived.

Tim Coombes was later convicted of possessing a ball-bearing gun. Matthew Smith shrugs off his heroism: "It was just instinct," he says. "I had no choice."

Susannah Hickling

Feeding the 29,000

WHEN TONY LOWE WORKED in distribution for Waitrose and Marks & Spencer, he was horrified at how much food UK supermarkets and food manufacturers threw away—an estimated 370,000 tons a year.

"I thought it was criminal that good food should go to an incinerator rather than to human beings who needed it," says Lowe. "Then I saw a chance to do something about it."

That was in 2003, when the homelessness charity Crisis advertised for someone to run their food redistribution operation FareShare. It was a small-scale enterprise, with volunteers collecting unsold sandwiches and



ready meals from food shops, then dishing them out to local charities the next day.

"The job was tailor-made for me," says Lowe, who also had six years' experience distributing aid for Oxfam.

One year later, he re-launched FareShare as an independent organisation—with a more dynamic outlook. "Rather than just appealing to corporate consciences, we positioned ourselves as a service provider—and charged for it," says Lowe. "We guaranteed companies that we could redistribute food for ten per cent less than it cost them to dispose of it."

FareShare now has a nationwide network of 12 centres distributing unsold food (within its best-by date) to 600 charities.

"We feed 29,000 people a day, and our target is 100,000," says Lowe, 46. "We've a long list of charities who want the food, but not enough to give them. UK firms make a big thing of sourcing food responsibly; we want them to dispose of it responsibly too."

Christopher Middleton

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