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### **The real 'stars'....**

If you've been watching X Factor lately then you won't fail to have missed the excitement as the hopes and dreams of potential popstars have been made and shattered. For many people watching each weekend, these young people are stars of the future and newspaper columns are taken up with gossip about every aspect of their lives. However, there are also other 'StARS' stories that are worth telling....

St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) in Cairo ministers to refugees from Sudan, Darfur, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq and elsewhere and strives to find new ways to meet their needs during the economic crisis that grips the world. They operate through five main programmes; the Children's Education Programme, Adult Education Programme, African Refugee Cooperative, Resettlement Legal Aid Office and Youth Leadership, Education and Access to Development Initiative (LEAD).

The Youth Leadership, Education and Access to Development Initiative (LEAD) provides educational services, sports activities and hip hop music therapy to at-risk Sudanese refugee youth. The activities are used to promote conflict resolution and peer communication skills, in a bid to move society out of the cycles that so often get repeated. The young adults are encouraged to become positive role models whilst in a safe environment.

In the hip hop sessions, volunteers help them to record and produce their own music, giving them a chance to express some of the difficulties they have experienced and the horrors they have witnessed, through a new medium.

The scheme is also committed to developing safe spaces for youth, designed in partnership with them, access to skill building programmes alongside mentoring and psycho-social services. StARS recognises that violence and crime are symptoms of wider social problems, and seeks to equip young people with tangible skills to help them avoid violence, crime and to make positive life choices.

This Christmas, let's not just focus on the celebrity and excitement of X Factor, but also remember the work of StARS in Egypt as it works on a daily basis to make a difference in the lives of the young people it seeks to help.