

## **Asylum seekers struggle to make ends meet**

**Life has gotten tougher for asylum seekers in Switzerland since the remaining provisions of a new law came into effect this month. Under the law, rejected asylum seekers are entitled to the basic minimum of shelter, food, clothes and medical assistance. How these are provided differs across the country. In the canton of Zurich, for example, those affected are expected to leave their accommodation for emergency shelters and they receive vouchers for the supermarket chain Migros to the tune of CHF60 a week. Vincent Landon has more.**

By [Vincent Landon](#), World Radio Switzerland

Joao Baptista Lutalacio from Angola has lived in Switzerland since 1994. The 45-year-old painter and decorator shares a room with seven others in the Kempthal transit camp near Winterthur. He says he doesn't know how he's expected to live on a CHF10 a day voucher.

"I am in Kempthal and there is no Migros in Kempthal. To get to a Migros, you have to take the bus or the train. A single ticket is CHF3.90 and a return is CHF7.80."

In the canton of Zurich alone, 1,200 people are on emergency assistance. In a faxed statement, the head of the social services department, Ruedi Hofstetter, said that travelling from Kempthal to the Migros in Winterthur was reasonable. He said that it was up to those who apply for emergency assistance to organise themselves. He added that rejected asylum seekers get a free daycard from the Federal Railways so that they can leave the country.

At the Kasama refugee cafe in Zurich, people without a residency permit can get a free meal once a week. Thirty-five year-old Buddhist monk Kaw Vida is slightly better off - at least for the moment. He left Burma in December 2006 and has been waiting for a year for the second interview, which will determine whether he can stay in Switzerland. He still gets CHF450 a month of social aid and is cheerful enough to tell a joke about the delay.

If he gets turned down, Kaw Vida says it is impossible for him to return to Burma and he will seek asylum elsewhere. The Federal Migration Office says that nationwide about 5,500 people are affected by the new law on emergency assistance. The Swiss Refugee Council believes the figure is nearer 10,000.