



JRS Asia Pacific

accompany

serve

advocate



Director's Letter

[A Space to Live Better](#)

News

[World Refugee Day 2014](#)

[Seeds of Hope in a Place of Desperation](#)

[We Need a Change of Heart - JRS in Geneva June 2014](#)

[In memoriam of Thomas B. Steinbugler, S.J.](#)

[JRS calls for regional cooperation following high-level roundtable](#)

Diakonia, meaning literally 'to serve' has been the quarterly publication of JRS Asia Pacific since 1983. The Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic Organisation established in 1980 by Father Pedro Arupe, SJ. Its mission is to accompany, serve and advocate for forcibly displaced persons around the world.

A Space to Live Better



Image from JRS video "When Home is not a Safe Place"

Bangkok, 7 July, 2014 -June is often a month where we receive news of how World Refugee Days is celebrated in different JRS projects, including the newly re-established JRS Singapore. In our message for the World Refugee Day, JRS International stresses the need to find safe spaces for refugee populations in which the host communities often find themselves living in poor conditions and can only offer to share what they have with compassion.

[Michel Foucault](#) defines space as; "The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space.....we live inside a set of relations." Within this definition, refugee populations may be seen as populations cast out from a particular social space called community or a state and now still searching to find their new

social space in foreign and unfamiliar places. The pictures of refugee camps which are normally located outside the local population illustrate their state of being outsiders.

In our current situation, creating spaces for the refugee population requires what Pope Frances referred to in his message on the World Day of Migrants and Refugees as a 'conversion of attitude'. This means "moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world." These attitudes create the prejudices and presuppositions we currently see against refugees and migrants and result in stricter policies towards refugees in particular.

As human beings live now in the society where space and time may be able to be compressed in digitalized means, the need for real human encounter remains key for human beings to create their own communities and webs of relationship. Within those encounters, one can experience and see directly ones fellows in all their richness and current limitations. Conversion of attitude may need this real encounter especially to help people think critically about our own assumptions which may have been shaped by the mainstream thoughts and media rather than a direct encounter especially with those who are in need.

An encounter with the refugees and their stories of fleeing will help us to look in different way at their plight. It creates a situation where our compassion is being called out, the doors of our hearts are being knocked at. When we open up, a desire to work to alleviate the suffering of refugees will flow rather than a desire to leave them indifferently. It is a situation where as human beings together we would like not only to create but to extend spaces for all where everybody can live better.

Seeds of Hope in a Place of Desperation



Indonesia, 23 June,2014 - For asylum seekers, living in an immigration detention center means spending their days anxiously facing uncertainties and boredom while awaiting a decision on their application for international protection. During these days of uncertainty a variety of activities aim to make this waiting period more meaningful. Some of the activities offered by JRS and IOM such as sports, English language courses, music lessons and swimming in a local pool have reduced detainees' emotional tensions and reaffirmed their capabilities. Recently the detained asylum seekers started to fill the bleak detention center



Planting flowers can be a simple entertainment and recreation that provides irreplaceable satisfaction- JRS Indonesia

"May the people detained here enjoy planting flowers and appreciate their beauty"

small circles forming a flower with eight petals are filled with various beautiful plants.

The detained men felt very happy when members of the Catholic Parish of Pasuruan visited them for a third time bringing 120 polybags of colorful ornamental plants. IOM also contributed several types of plants and flowers. In a few months the front yard and surrounding environment of the detention center will look like a garden as aspired by Mahmud.

Detainees, JRS and IOM facilitated this gardening together. While JRS is providing compost, plant seeds, bamboo planks, a hoe and watering cans, fertilizer and pesticides, IOM is providing sand, cement, flower and plant seeds.

This gardening experience shows that when given the opportunity detainees will use their creativity, skill and craftsmanship that at the end benefits not only themselves but also others around them. Being able to form and shape ones surrounding making it more beautiful and useful is a longing of every human being. Being able to leave ones legacy in even such a desolate place like a detention center is empowering. To see things grow is a worthy alternative to just counting the endless days hoping for a safer and more dignified future. The results of the detainees' efforts are also appreciated by the staff of the immigration detention center."

"Gardening and planting is a good activity for the people detained here. The garden they made is pretty good too. Unfortunately there are not enough plants yet," said the Head of the Immigration Detention Center. Other staff revealed similar views, "The garden and plants look good. I support gardening and planting activities because it reduces boredom and stress of the detainees here."

"May the people detained here enjoy planting flowers and appreciate their beauty. Planting flowers can be a simple entertainment and recreation that provides irreplaceable satisfaction," a visiting member of the local parish expressed hopes.***

Daryadi Achmadi

This article was first published in the JRS Indonesia Quarterly Newsletter, [Refuge](#):

[English](#)

[Indonesian](#)

We Need a Change of Heart - JRS in Geneva June 2014



Bangkok, 10 July, 2014 - The annual consultations of the United Nations Refugee Agency – UNHCR – took place in Geneva from 17-19th June of this year, with the theme Women's Leadership and Participation.

JRS was represented at the consultations by Fr. Michael Gallagher, permanent representative in Geneva; Mitzi Schroder, Director of Policy and Advocacy at [JRS USA](#); Katrine Camilleri, Country Director of [JRS Malta](#) and Junita Calder, Advocacy and Communications Officer at [JRS Asia Pacific](#). JRS staff and

Junita Calder of JRSAP speaks during the Monitoring Places of Immigration Detention session held on June 18, 2014, as part of the UNHCR Annual NGO Consultations. The session was coordinated by the International Detention Coalition (IDC) of which JRS is a member.

volunteers work with displaced people in diverse situations across fifty countries. Having representatives from different regions present at the Consultations is one way to guarantee that refugee voices from around the world are heard.

Topics discussed in the central sessions of the consultations included Regional updates, partnerships between UNHCR and NGOs, youth leadership, mental health and psychosocial support, internal displacement, statelessness and refugee protection. The role that women refugees play in protecting themselves and their families in immigration detention and whilst undertaking dangerous journeys by sea was also highlighted and many amazing stories of survival and continues victory over struggles were shared.

In the thematic session, Protection at Sea – Women’s Perspectives, Katrine Camilleri spoke movingly, saying that through the work of JRS Malta she has come to realise we do not only need a change of policy when it comes to “stopping the boats”, as this alone will not modify and improve the situation, what we really need is “a change of heart”. Katrine suggested this might be achieved by accompanying- getting to know and relating to- these people who risk dangerous journeys in high seas to find safety and sanctuary. She mentioned as an example, how educational trainings help in Malta. To address a lack of human empathy, information and critical thinking from students about the current situation in the country, she often uses a simple media literacy exercise designed to show, how the media currently describes refugees to Malta, in the same way the media has described Maltese refugees to other parts of the world, in the past.

Junita Calder was invited to speak on a panel coordinated by the International Detention Coalition during the session, Monitoring Places of Immigration Detention. Being detained or the constant threat of being locked behind bars in places of held detention, is a part of the refugee experience it is often more difficult to encourage true empathy with.

One of the questions addressed to Ms. Calder was whether women and girls should always be considered merely as victims, the most vulnerable of those held in detention centres whilst awaiting refugee status determination. Drawing on her knowledge of the relationships formed with women in detention by dedicated JRS teams in the Asia Pacific Region, Junita shared that actually, women in detention are often important change agents. Despite the fact that women and children in detention face extreme challenges, including the dangers of repeated exposure to violence, exploitation, malnutrition, inadequate medical care and lack of opportunities to develop. Many of the women JRS interacts with are constantly acting on their own behalf and that of their families, to negotiate and ensure what little protection is possible in their harsh and restrictive environments. Women are often very accurate in reporting their conditions and requesting services, where avenues exist for them to do so. Also, many resilient women confined with their children, are doing their best to provide what little education and childhood normalcy they can to girls and boys who are missing out during crucial years of their development.

Advocating for the rights of refugees is an integral part of the JRS mission. It is about sharing powerful messages from refugee voices and experiences. Each of the JRS representatives in Geneva last month had the opportunity to meet with colleagues from other NGOs and UNHCR staff and raise awareness about the current situations faced by the people JRS comes into contact with everyday. These messages have already been taken up by decision makers and ideas passed back to UNHCR offices in various regions who have the power to help.

The UNHCR Annual NGO consultations in Geneva this June were a great time for learning from each other and defending the rights of the refugee women and girls, men and boys who we serve. We can only hope the presence of four JRS representatives and the refugee stories they shared will help to change hearts as well as policies for the benefit of our refugee friends and colleagues around the world in the years to come.

Junita Calder, JRS Asia Pacific Advocacy Officer

In memoriam of Thomas B. Steinbugler, S.J.



Fr. Thomas B Steinbugler with JRS Staff-JRS archive

"We were not surprised, we knew he was very loved"

Bangkok, 12 July, 2014 - Current and former Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Asia Pacific staff members Mrs. Rachanee Sareechaitthaweepong (Took), Ms. Vlaiwan Pokthavi (Kep) and Ms Siriphen Limsirikul (Ah), who worked with Fr. Thomas (Tom) while he was with JRS in Bangkok, travelled to the Philippines to attend the funeral in Manila.

After attending the funeral, Took, Human Resources Officer of JRS Asia Pacific shared, “I felt very sad when I learnt the news. When we saw so many people at the funeral we remembered how important Fr. Thomas was not only for us but for all the people who met him. We were not surprised, we knew he was very loved”

The following text is taken largely from the homily in memory written and delivered by Mark Raper SJ, Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific.

Fr. Thomas B Steinbugler was born in 1929, his childhood was marked by the Great Depression of the thirties and then came the

austerity of the Second World War.

Fr. Thomas entered the Jesuit seminary before his 19th birthday. He lived for almost 66 years as a Jesuit, well over 50 of those years he spent in the Philippines. In 1955 he was assigned to Ateneo de Manila High School as a Jesuit scholastic before returning to the United States for ordination. On his return to the Philippines as a priest, he spent the sixties and the seventies at Ateneo de Manila University. He established the scholarships programme for poor students in the mid-1960s. He raised the money for the scholars and personally took care of all who were helped, especially those who became sick or found themselves in any difficulty. He never stopped helping to generate scholarships until the day he died.

The late sixties and early seventies were turbulent years in the Philippines. Nationalist feeling entered every aspect of society. Even in Jesuit communities; the American Jesuits were faced with a difficult decision: stay or leave. Fr. Thomas made a choice to remain, despite the normal possible hurts and misunderstandings, he chose to be of service, to be a friend, to be in the background, to give a leg-up to the Filipinos who were ready to assume leadership roles.

In the mid-1980s he began to assist the growing Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Asia Pacific. Appointed as JRS representative for the Philippines, he kept an eye on the Vietnamese arrival camp in Puerto Princessa and the camp in Bataan for refugees departing for the USA, mostly supporting the JRS workers who were sent to these camps. Then, in 1990, he was called to Bangkok where he worked as the Regional Director of JRS Asia Pacific three years.

During his time as the Regional Director of JRSAP Fr. Thomas's large heart stretched out to welcome and encourage over 100 JRS workers, and many refugees in camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia and Hong Kong.

Kep, who worked with Fr. Thomas when he was the JRSAP Director remembers, "I will never forget the 40th birthday party (1992) Tom arranged for me. That was the most wonderful birthday party I ever had in my life. I was so touched by his love, he showed me how many people love me, all over the world and it was amazing how he could do that. He made me feel like the whole world is my family, a feeling I have even until today."

Refugees from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and later the Bhutanese in Nepal and Rohingya in Bangladesh knew of his care and interest. Not only his care for the workers and his kindness to the refugees but Fr. Thomas also had the skills to do as Fr Arrupe asked of JRS, that is to "act as a switchboard between offers of help ... and the needs..."

In his three years as JRSAP Regional Director, Fr. Thomas set up a programme for legal assistance to refugees in Hong Kong and in the Palawan camps. In 1990 he led the way to establish a JRS foothold in Cambodia: "We want to be there to welcome the refugees home," he wrote. This team became the foundation of the Jesuit Refugee and Jesuit Social Service active in Cambodia today.

Another service also began just as Fr Thomas came to Bangkok, that was, caring for the Burmese refugees.

For everyone involved with JRS, including Fr. Thomas, the refugee story is about the lives and hopes of people we know personally. Knowing people personally, our understanding is transformed. Through engagement with JRS, Tom helped refugees to open the doors of people's hearts, beyond the transitory images of the media, to catch a glimpse into the inspiring lives of people struggling to defend their rights, protect their families and give their children a future.

The Ignatian 'way' includes three steps: start in the Spirit; give from the heart; and choose a practical path. This was Fr. Thomas's way. He sought to be united with the discerning Spirit who guides each of us. He gave himself with heart and great enthusiasm. He got things done.

"Tom could share his own weaknesses bravely and I considered that this was his strength in management. It was his humble character that taught me little by little how to serve others, without pride but as a real servant." shared Kep

Thomas had absorbed the "Magis" of Ignatius: For him there were no limits to the people with whom he would mix, no privileged groups, he was open to all, rich and poor, with a preference for the poor. His was a spirituality of empathy, of compassion. Magis for Fr. Thomas clearly meant more love, more sharing, more service.

We often heard the words "It's not a chore - it's a joy..." when Tom was with us.

The funeral Mass was held on Saturday, 14 June in the Oratory of St. Ignatius, Loyola House of Studies, Ateneo de Manila University Campus. Interment followed at Sacred Heart Novitiate cemetery, Novaliches, Quezon City, immediately after the Funeral Mass.

JRS calls for regional cooperation following high-level roundtable



Sidney, 17 July, 2014 - Jesuit Refugee Service has reiterated its call for the implementation of durable solutions to Asia Pacific's refugee crisis following a recent high-level roundtable on Australia's asylum seeker policy.

Jointly organised by [Australia21](#), [the Andrew and Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law](#) at UNSW and [the Centre for Policy Development](#), the roundtable was held at Parliament House in Canberra attended by 35 high-level policy makers and

Roundtable participants- JRS Australia

“This unanimity is promising since it dovetails with JRS’ position that Australia’s refugee problem lies not with the insecurity of its borders but in the lack of durable solutions for refugees elsewhere in the region.”

refugee experts. Among them were a former Indonesian Ambassador to Australia, a Malaysian strategist and parliamentarians from three of the four major parties.

Discussions centred on the creation of a long-term framework for Australia’s asylum seeker policy. The meeting’s ultimate goal was to consider how Australia might facilitate a sustainable immigration policy that balances protection, safety, transparency and prosperity.

“This roundtable marked the start of a new conversation about a complex policy area that has been a political hot potato for too long. It aims to be a contribution which is helpful to all sides of the political spectrum and which reflects Australian values,” said Steering Committee members Bob Douglas, Jane McAdam and Travers McLeod.

While the roundtable did not seek to reach consensus, participants agreed on the importance of implementing fair, transparent and efficient refugee status determination procedures, wherever processing takes place.

“This unanimity is promising since it dovetails with JRS’ position that Australia’s refugee problem lies not with the insecurity of its borders but in the lack of durable solutions for refugees elsewhere in the region,” says Oliver White, roundtable participant and JRS’ Head of Policy and Advocacy.

“No single measure will stop boat arrivals in Australia, and in fact ‘stopping the boats’ should not be the government’s core objective. Instead, it should be part of a broader regional approach which manages the movement of people and which places the protection of asylum seekers ahead of national politics and border protection.”

Mr White praised the organisers of the roundtable, saying that encouragement of a bipartisan approach was essential to the creation of an effective regional migration framework.

“A regional approach to asylum must address the protection of refugees as a result of their onward movement, and it must be acknowledged that often the reason refugees continue to move onwards is the lack of protection in transit countries,” he says.

“Australia can play a role in encouraging other states to sign the Refugee Convention and can share knowledge, experience and resources to increase the capacity of those states to process and integrate refugees into their communities.”

The roundtable was conducted under the Chatham House Rule and was informed by a discussion paper coordinated by CPD titled ‘*Beyond Operation Sovereign Borders: a long-term asylum policy for Australia*’. Two former senior Immigration Department officials, Peter Hughes and CPD Fellow Arja Keska-Nummi were the lead authors. The paper can be read [here](#).

This article was first published in [JRS Australia web site](#)

World Refugee Day 2014



Celebrating World Refugee Day- JRS Thailand

JRS walks with you

Bangkok, 22 July, 2014 – Between World Refugee Day in 2013 and World Refugee Day in 2014, the number of urban refugees arriving and struggling to survive in Bangkok, Thailand has more than quadrupled, from around 2,000 people to now around 8,000 people of many nationalities. This sudden influx is due to increases in [violent conflict](#), worsening levels of [persecution](#) in their home countries and the hope that Asian nations, like Thailand, will offer some support and hospitality.

Life for them here is not easy though, as mentioned in this JRS video – [When Home is Not a Safe Place](#).

Additionally, this year, asylum seekers and refugees in Bangkok face heightened security concerns due to [civil unrest](#) and martial law being declared just one month before World Refugee Day on May 20th, followed by a military takeover of Thailand two days

later. With all this in mind, World Refugee Day events at JRS Bangkok this year were planned to reduce the security risk to clients and allow for a bit of fun.

On the 18th, 19th and 20th of June, asylum seekers, refugees, JRS staff and other local people joined in participatory activities, to interact and get to know one another, to make a connection. The theme was “JRS walks with you” and the aim, as described by JRS Psychosocial Counsellor, Krista Senden, was to help people “laugh, smile and de-stress”.

During the three days there were opportunities for people to take photos together, to share jokes, eat treats like ice cream and even to blow bubbles for the children to chase and pop! Bags full of crayons, pencils, erasers, and stickers along with colouring paper were given to children and parents with children at home and some spot prizes were given too. Around forty-five families and individuals attended over the three days and helped to decorate the office with signs in many languages. Most members of JRS Urban Refugee Programme, JRS Thailand Country Office and JRS Asia Pacific Regional Office assisted in some way to make the events happen- lending equipment, helping with shopping for the events and enjoying the activities with the people we accompany.

The human connections made during these activities can be said to be the real benefit of World Refugee Day. It's not exactly a time to celebrate but a time to reflect. A time to get to know [refugees](#) and [their stories](#), to make space for them in our hearts and to see what else we can do to not only be good hosts ourselves but also to encourage others in Thailand to be good hosts too.

adv.com@jrsap.org Publisher: Bambang A Sipayung SJ Editor: Junita Calder and Helen Pardo Asia Pacific Regional Office PO Box 49, Sanampao Post Office, 10406 Thailand +66 (0) 2 278 4182 Web: www.jrsap.org Twitter: @JRSASIAPACIFIC

Diakonia August 2014
Editor: Helen Pardo