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Letter from Director



Fr Bambang A. Sipayung SJ, Regional Director

Recently, I met with a refugee I know who had good news to tell. He and his family entered into an interview process for a resettlement in a third country. "My fourth year of waiting," he said, "now finally shows a dim light of hope." While the interview for resettlement may have a different result than he and his family are expecting and may add another period of waiting, his bright eyes could not conceal his joy and happiness from this little step forward with his case. He finally sees a future for him and his family.

What I also learned during this conversation, was his way of coping with his current constraints of living as refugees in Bangkok. Fear of arrest, detention, children's education and daily living are always challengingly difficult to cope. While his "success story" of resettlement may not be largely shared by other refugees, his ways of coping are shared by the general refugee population. This kind of human resilience, when living within this many restraints, shows human agencies. Human agency is an important element to give dynamic to shape our future and live or act above and beyond material-structural restrictions.

[The reaction from 15 NGOs to the first draft of Global Compact on Refugees](#) strongly stresses in its expectation # 5, that inclusion and agency of people concerned into the Programme of Action should be facilitated. I think it highlights our accompaniment experiences in JRS where many times we learned and were humbled by the human ability to go beyond and above. The proximity with the refugees helps to break the barrier and constraint which are often imposed to us through our upbringing and it opens a new possibility.

As we come closer to Easter Celebration and in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, to the New Year or water festival as it is widely known outside of these countries, I see how the human agency resonates with the experiences of apostles after the death of Jesus. Easter, Jesus resurrection within Catholic religious belief tradition came down generation after generation as a direct encounter of the apostles and first community of Christian with Jesus who lives again despite his death on the cross. The encounter brings about changes among Jesus followers who then became witnesses to his death and resurrection. It is this encounter with the divine that moved the Jesus followers to go beyond and above the constraints of fear and desperateness to become a messenger of joy and hope.

Fr Bambang A. Sipayung SJ, Regional Director

Global: JRS reacts to the first draft of the Global Compact on Refugees



Rome, 20 March 2018 – The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and 15 other NGOs have jointly released a reaction statement welcoming the general direction of the negotiations that have led to the [first draft](#) of a [Global Compact on Refugees](#), issued by the UNHCR on 9 March 2018.

This revised version has made significant changes to the initial zero-draft, including explicit references to the foundational documents and principles of the international refugee protection regime, stronger language on the accountability of member states, and more explicit mechanisms for responsibility-sharing.

The NGOs believe that the first draft is a step in the right direction, and are committed to support the UNHCR and member states to build on this progress, so that the Global Compact may be a robust tool to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate refugees.

Read the full reaction [here](#).

List of signatories:

Action Against Hunger
ADRA

Asylum Access
 Care International
 Caritas Internationalis
 Danish Refugee Council
 InterAction
 International Catholic Migration Commission
 International Rescue Committee
 Jesuit Refugee Service
 Lutheran World Federation
 Mercy Corps
 Norwegian Refugee Council
 Oxfam International
 Plan International
 Save the Children International

#Do1Thing: Hope for refugees begins with you



Mr. Atef, a Syrian refugee, is a PE teacher at a JRS school in Baalback, Lebanon. (Kristof Holvenyi/JRS)

Rome, 9 January 2018 – We hear the words “refugee crisis” all the time, and the sheer magnitude of the current situation – more than 65 million people forced to leave their homes to seek safety, with 22.5 million of them having had to flee their countries – can leave us feeling powerless and frustrated. Whose responsibility is it to solve the “refugee crisis”? Can anything be done? Whom should I blame for the situation?

The real crisis, however, is not a “refugee crisis”, but a crisis of solidarity, or what Pope Francis has called “the globalisation of indifference”. The response that is needed is both individual and collective: solidarity is not just an ideal, but is expressed in concrete actions and steps that draw us closer to our neighbours, in whatever situation they find themselves.

Pope Francis encourages each one of us to act: “A single individual is enough for hope to exist. And that individual can be you.” To

mark the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees on 14 January, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is releasing a campaign, called #Do1Thing, to show what individuals are doing to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate refugees in their communities. The campaign features five videos, each one highlighting the impact that one volunteer can have on the lives of refugees.

These are ordinary people, doing simple things: offering friendship, or helping with a language class. They are not engaged in many great and heroic acts, but often are just offering one thing, one form of support, one day in a week. Often, they just #Do1Thing.

Pope Francis says that if you can bring hope to one person, “then there will be another ‘you’, and another ‘you’, and it turns into an ‘us’...when there is an ‘us’, there begins a revolution.” Please share your own #Do1Thing story, so that others can know that they are not acting alone, but are part of a movement, a revolution of compassion and tenderness.

Australia: The agency of refugees



Carolina Gottardo, second from right, speaking at the Australian Refugee Alternatives Conference in February (Jesuit Refugee Service)

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) was well represented at a recent Australian conference titled Refugee Alternatives, held on 13-14 February in Melbourne with more than 400 attendees.

Refugees leading the agenda

Australia’s JRS Director Carolina Gottardo participated in the opening and closing addresses. Among the 65 speakers at the conference were more than 60% with lived experience as a refugee; more than 60% of the speakers were women. Together the panellists examined current and potential solutions for refugees and other forcibly displaced people in Australia, the Asia-Pacific region, and internationally.

Carolina said, “Together conference participants worked towards an Australian Plan of Action, examining Australia in the context of global refugee policy, in the Asia-Pacific region and at the national level. I was honoured to be part of such an inspiring conference and to hear firsthand about the initiatives and projects –in Australia, in the region and globally –that are being led by refugees and people seeking asylum and are making a difference.”

Many thanks for giving a girl a dream and the weapon to fight gender inequality and gender based violence.

She highlighted how the conference “has turned upside down the dynamics of power, with refugees and people seeking asylum at centre stage and leading the agenda on the policies that affect their lives. This conference focused on alternatives and solutions.”

Carolina addressed the conference on the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, noting the importance of coordinating local, national, regional and global work and of ensuring that the Global Compacts do more than just addressing high-level issues: "We need to ensure that the compacts have a real impact on the lives of refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants."

The empowerment of education

Carolina and other JRS Australia staff attending the conference were delighted to meet with a former refugee whose engagement with JRS has empowered her to become a community advocate. Deruka Dekuek was attending the conference on behalf of her organisation, Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council, where she is a mentor, supporting refugees who have recently immigrated to the city.

Deruka was born in war-torn Sudan. When she was seven years old her father died after being tortured. For the next seven years she and her mother and sisters lived in the bush, walking miles daily for water and firewood. Attending school was out of the question.

It was only at age 15 that Deruka could finally attend kindergarten, when she lived in Nairobi with a family member. When she had to move to Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp two years later, she had reached Year 5 level. She had two more terms of schooling at Kakuma; she loved studying and topped her class, but this meant "beatings from the boys (who didn't want to lose to a girl) and being rejected by the girls".

Kakuma has a refugee population of more than 170,000, and JRS is one of the organisations advocating for the rights of the refugees and running program to offer them empowerment. Recognising Deruka's potential, JRS workers at Kakuma offered her a scholarship to attend a school outside the camp.

For Deruka, this was a breakthrough opportunity. "Thanks to JRS for empowering me with the scholarship opportunity and enabling me to realise the power of education! The scholarship has enabled me to have wings and break the cycle of desperation and long endured poverty." She also notes that going to school "liberated me from the daily tasks facing all the other girls at the camp of walking for the water and firewood which took hours each day."

In 2004 Deruka moved to Australia when she and family members were granted settlement visas. Always mindful of the power of education, she resumed her studies after settling into life in Australia and starting a family. She gained a Certificate in Aged Care and a Diploma in Community Services, and later a Bachelor of Arts degree. In 2018 she is completing an MA in Development Studies.

Deruka said: "I will always be grateful to JRS, to the people who gave me a chance to learn. Many thanks for giving a girl a dream and the weapon to fight gender inequality and gender based violence. Education will empower more girls for generations!"

Indonesia: The forgotten refugees



JRS staff member, Diah, during a fun day event for refugee children waiting for resettlement out of Indonesia, in one of the refugee run education centres in Cisarua, West Java. (JRS Indonesia)

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country and home to 250 million people, hosts 13,800 forcibly displaced people from 52 nations—e.g. Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Palestine, Sudan, and Yemen. Men, women, and children from ethnic or religious minorities (such as the Hazara from Afghanistan, Rohingya from Myanmar, or Tamil from Sri Lanka) have come to Indonesia during the last decade as asylum seekers and refugees, in search of international protection.

Indonesia, which produced refugees in the past, has not ratified the Refugee Convention or protocol, but has so far mostly upheld its non-refoulement obligation. The country allows UNHCR to determine those in need of international protection, but had until the end of 2016 no clear guidelines for authorities as to how to handle their refugee population.

While some JRS Indonesia staff are present to provide psychosocial activities in only two of the thirteen immigration detention centres, which serve a minority of the 2,000 people who

are detained under the immigration law, its focus since 2012 has been the asylum seekers and refugees living independently in the community in surrounding areas of the capital city Jakarta.

40 per cent of people seeking asylum in Indonesia survive without support from the government or other humanitarian organisations; they are forced to use their savings and rely on money sent by family and friends. Many, at some point, end up in desperate situations without sufficient food or shelter. JRS Indonesia's "befriend urban refugees" project in West Java is the main service provider for the most vulnerable: those trying to survive the year's long waiting process of receiving refugee status and resettlement. We are confronted with difficult decisions as to whom is most vulnerable and deserving of our support.

JRS Indonesia provides life-saving support towards housing, food, and healthcare to vulnerable families with children, and people with physical and mental health conditions. Seven JRS staff members, from a variety of backgrounds, accompany those who have urgent healthcare needs, but are unable to pay for a physician's care at local medical facilities. There is also a cadre of volunteers who go with the refugees to local clinics to interpret their condition to the doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. Telephone or face-to face-requests for financial support towards housing and food are followed up by home visits, where individual needs and resources are evaluated, and decisions are made as to the most appropriate form of support.

Refugees with skills and talents are encouraged to volunteer their time as community interpreters or as English teachers in one of two JRS learning centres, where they help each other acquire important language skills. First and foremost, we aim

to be a friend during a difficult period in the lives of the refugees, whom we see as our brothers and sisters; we also strive to identify and realize solutions, and enable them to regain at least some aspects of normality and autonomy as teachers or students. Recently, we have also encountered an increasing need to assist asylum seekers to learn about their rights. We established information sessions and individual consultations to keep them aware as to where they stand in the asylum-seeking process.

All in all, this year has not been any easier for refugees in Indonesia: many experience even longer waiting times and less prospect for resettlement out of the country. Such conditions have increased the urgency to explore new and creative possibilities towards a dignified life in exile. While the number of asylum seekers and refugees is small compared to other states, a harmonious and mutual engagement between forcibly displaced people and local communities is paramount.

JRS Indonesia conducts public awareness and community engagement activities, such as inviting refugees to celebrate national holidays with the local community. Educating local students about forcibly displaced people, both living in Indonesia and throughout the world, promotes greater understanding and tolerance. We are encouraged by a growing number of volunteers, from both the refugee community and local Indonesians, who support and inspire our humanitarian effort towards better refugee rights and integration.

Over the years, JRS has become a trusted partner of refugees and their host communities; part of our mission is finding solutions towards a better and safer future for both. Within the financial and human limitations that we experience, we are committed to do our best to enable our brothers and sisters seeking international protection, the ability to overcome the adversities of the past and move into a more stable future— wherever it might be.

Lars Stenger, National Information Advocacy Officer, Indonesia

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