

diakonia

Serving refugees | sharing their voices

PROTECTING *every* CHILD

*sustaining orphanages
on the Burma border*

CLOSING THE CAMP

Resettling Cambodia's Montagnards

A FINAL ACT OF KINDNESS

Villagers remember a friend

FAREWELL

*JRS country director
reflects on time in Australia*

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Cover photo: One primary student eats lunch at a JRS school in Piang Luang, Thailand. Read about the protection of children on page 11. (Photo by Molly Mullen/ JRS Asia Pacific)

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 Fr Pedro Arrupe, SJ. Its mission is to accompany, serve and advocate for forcibly displaced persons around the world.

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Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy, SJ, visits the JRS project in Papua New Guinea. See page 14. (Photo by Peter Balleis SJ/ JRS International)

EDITORIAL

Hope and desperation

We were welcomed to Mass with an opening song, "It is a new life in the Lord..." Fr Peter Balleis and I (JRS International Director) were on a field visit to Papua New Guinea, and celebrated the first Sunday of Advent in a small chapel with mostly refugees from West Papua residing in Neogamban, Western Province, Papua New Guinea. The refugees in this church are part of the 10,000 people residing and seeking refuge in this remote border, hidden and forgotten.

The choir sang with life, filling the chapel with joy and warmly welcoming Fr Peter and I to their humble chapel.

Saint Paul referred to all people as saints. I could understand what he meant at this Mass, when I heard the upbeat music of these saints of God in exile.

These refugees did not have a choice to live like this. It was decided for them: Australia, Germany and the Netherlands drew the boundaries of the whole island (West Papua of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea). "This is our land and we are the same people (Melanesian). Suddenly someone from above decided to separate us," said one West Papua refugee, now living on the border in PNG.

Displacement is often driven by competition for resources. Multinational corporations (e.g. Free Port Inc. of the US in West Papua for gold mining; Ok Tedi Mining company of Canada in PNG) have taken interest in the natural resources of this island. When politics and economics combine people become displaced.

And what is left for the people? Do West Papuans have a share in the wealth of the nation? Why is there no corporate social responsibility? Corporations have plundered the land for resources, destroying the very fabric of the environment, poisoning the rivers and land—a source of livelihood for the Melanesian peoples.

At the Advent Mass, Fr Masjon, the presider, spoke about the thousands of people fleeing persecution in the Old Testament, fleeing slavery in Egypt and seeking "the promised land." "You share the same hope for freedom of the people of Israel..." Fr Masjon said.

For people who have been stuck in PNG for 25 years, afraid to return home, and unable to make a living on the PNG side, I wonder what this "hope for freedom" means that Fr Masjon was referring to.

Throughout the Asia Pacific region refugees are driven to desperation by the conditions in their new host countries. But they are also driven by desperation to escape persecution. They hope with desperation. I don't claim to understand this; no one can understand this life except those who live it. In PNG protection is a mirage, being forcibly returned to Indonesia is a real fear, and hope in desperation is their cup of suffering that Christ referred to.

We wait for yet another sign of "new life" as we draw near the event of the Resurrection (Easter). Perhaps people and nations could remove the fortresses of prejudice and policy that keep people in exile. Governments can shoulder the responsibility to protect refugees who are forced to flee. It should also instil in corporations a felt sense of responsibility, as opposed to a relentless thirst for profits.

Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy SJ



Weaving a future

Children at Mary's House orphanage in Northern Thailand recently found a market for their after school activity - rug weaving. The project that Mary started to keep the children out of trouble in the evening blossomed into an income-generating project when a souvenir shop in Bangkok made a bulk order of the rugs at Christmas time. The children sold 40 rugs and the money supports the orphanage's operating costs. Read more about Mary and the children on pages 10-13.



JRS launches new site

JRS Asia Pacific recently launched its new website at www.jrsap.org. Now readers can keep up to date with news affecting displaced people in the region, donate to projects, read our history and follow the main campaigns JRS AP is working on: landmines and cluster munitions, internally displaced people, women's issues, detention, education and urban refugees. With this website, JRS AP remains dedicated to advocating for refugees and now has a new format to share their stories.



Advocate awarded

Tun Channareth, a long-time advocate for banning landmines and cluster munitions, and a landmine survivor himself, was recently awarded an honorary doctorate from the Jesuit University of Seattle. Channareth accepted the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize with JRS for their work advocating against landmines.

To read more news briefs or more on these stories, go to www.jrsap.org



Detention workshop

Last month JRS staff met in Jogjakarta, Indonesia to discuss their work in places of detention. JRS works in seven immigration detention centres in the region. Staff from Australia, Indonesia and Thailand came together to share their experiences, and to explore ways to promote alternatives to detention. JRS staff explored ways to informally monitor conditions in detention, how to manage stress and devised action plans for promoting alternatives to detention throughout the region. Everyone agreed that patience, the ability to listen and fostering good relations with authorities were essential to working in detention centres. Read an introduction to detention issues on page 8.

Superior General visits

With fewer men joining the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, every year, Fr Adolfo Nicolas, superior general of the Jesuits, said collaboration is a key now more than ever. In a speech at Xavier Hall, the Bangkok Jesuit residence, Nicolas spoke to a group of 100 Jesuits and dozens of other religious, volunteers and lay people. "Jesuits need to cooperate with people who possess the human qualities of love, hope, joy and justice," Fr Nicolas said. Jesuit priests must not become isolated and uncommunicative with people." JRS staff and volunteers have, since its genesis, included people of many faiths and spiritual practices.



More Ahmadi detained

SINCE DECEMBER, THAI AUTHORITIES HAVE ARRESTED AND DETAINED 114 AHMADI MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THREE TARGETED RAIDS. MANY HAVE CHOSEN TO RETURN TO PAKISTAN, THE COUNTRY THEY WERE FLEEING FROM. OTHERS REMAIN.



Bangkok, 13 March 2011 — Ahmadi asylum seekers have suffered tremendously. Religious persecution in their country has driven them from their homes, family, and careers to a place that offers little in the way of protection. Despite facing arrest and detention they never lose their dignity and resilience.

“Life in Pakistan for the Ahmadis has become a living hell. Hundreds have been murdered

just because of their faith. Posters that claim ‘Ahmadis deserve to be killed’ are put on walls to incite public hatred towards them,” said Dr Iftikhar, Consul General of the Pacific Island of Tuvalu, on a visit to Bangkok to raise awareness of the plight of Ahmadis.

The Ahmadis are a Muslim ethnic group considered to be heretical by orthodox Muslims in Pakistan. They have been declared non-Muslims because they do not believe that Mohammed was the final prophet sent to guide mankind. A number of laws have been passed that make it a criminal offence for Ahmadis to profess or practice their faith.

Over the past three years, more than 450 Ahmadis have arrived in Bangkok in search of protection. But on 14 December 2010, at 6:30 a.m., Thai immigration officers raided the homes of 86 Ahmadi asylum seekers and refugees. This first group, which included many women and children, was forced into police vans and driven to Bangkok’s immigration detention centre, where they were processed and sent to court for violating Thailand’s immigration policy.

Facing persecution at home and arrest and indefinite detention in Thailand, the Ahmadis are without solutions.

“Only people living this life can know what we are going through,” said an asylum seeker who chose to return to Pakistan after being arrested and detained. Since January’s first round-up of Ahmadi people, two more raids were conducted, resulting in 114 Ahmadi detained on immigration violations.

Dr Iftikhar Ayaz had a simple message to share – the Ahmadis are peaceful people facing persecution and should be offered protection under the various human rights treaties and conventions.

“These people have come here to escape injustice, cruelty and the threat to their lives,” said Dr Iftikhar Ayaz.

“Those Ahmadis who have gone home have not done so because they wanted to or because they think it is safe. The conditions in IDCs [immigration detention centres] are so terrible many felt they would rather take the risk of returning to Pakistan,” said one Ahmadi community worker.

Some of those arrested were recognised as refugees, but the majority were still in the process of becoming recognised by the UN’s



📷 A mother and daughter practice English at the Ahmadi community centre. Since the arrests, the centre has closed. (Photo by Molly Mullen/ JRS Asia Pacific)

refugee agency (UNHCR). One asylum seeker had been waiting for nearly a year, after having his interview postponed eight times. Without status he would spend months in detention under difficult conditions, so he decided to risk his safety and return to Pakistan.

International protection

Dr Iftikhar Ayaz is urging governments such as Thailand and the international community to show compassion and offer Ahmadi temporary protection until long-term solutions can be found.

“The issue of Ahmadis leaving Pakistan is an issue of human rights,” said Dr Iftikhar Ayaz.

While the Ahmadis wait for UNHCR to recognise them as refugees and facilitate their resettlement they must live with uncertainty.

“What is important is that those who flee [Pakistan] are provided refuge by the international community and treated with respect and dignity. Thailand is currently president of the UN Human Rights Council and has a great responsibility to observe the UNHCR conventions and charters,” added Dr Iftikhar Ayaz.

Oliver White, Regional Communications and Advocacy Officer



Montagnards resettled and returned

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS WATCH CLOSELY TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF 70 DISPLACED PEOPLE AFTER A REFUGEE CENTRE CLOSED IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA. WHILE MOST WERE RESETTLED, OTHERS RETURNED TO VIETNAM.

Phnom Penh, 28 February 2011 — Following the closure of the centre managed by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) on 15 February, human rights organisations have called on the Cambodian government to ensure it offers protection to asylum seekers.

Seventy Montagnards, part of ethnic minority tribes from Vietnam’s Central Highlands, had been housed at the facility in Phnom Penh. Late last year, the government ordered UNHCR to close the centre by 1 January, saying that the Montagnards would either need to be resettled in third countries or returned to Vietnam. This deadline was later extended to 15 February.

According to UNHCR, 55 Montagnards had been resettled in Canada and the United States before the deadline, while a further 10 are currently awaiting settlement.

The applications for the remaining 10 were unsuccessful and are to be sent back to Vietnam.

The director of Jesuit Refugee Service Cambodia, Sr Denise Coghlan, OSM, described the decision to close the centre as a positive step; she said it was an imperfect set-up that es-

entially saw the asylum seekers confined to the centre, living in limbo as their refugee statuses remained up in the air.

“Some people were in a closed site for six years, so I think it’s very good that it’s now finished,” Sr Coghlan said.

Sr Coghlan was among the most vocal critics when Cambodia chose to deport Uighur asylum seekers back to China in late 2009. Now, she said, she’s hopeful the government will give due process to future displaced people.

“Like most laws, something’s written down and we have to see how it’s implemented. I hope it will be implemented in a humane way and according to the principle and spirit of the UN conventions,” Sr Coghlan said.

Human Rights Watch concerned

Human Rights Watch expressed concerns that after the refugee centre closes, the Cambodian government will screen future Montagnard asylum seekers under a procedure that does not meet international standards.

The Human Rights Watch statement criticised the sub-decree passed by the Cambodian government in December 2009 that does not incorporate the UN Refugee Convention’s definition of what constitutes a refugee. It also lacks provisions to fulfil Cambodia’s other obligations as a country that is a signatory to the UN refugee convention, which ensures protection to those seeking refugee status.

With insufficient procedural protections in place to prevent unlawful forced returns, the sub-decree provides Cambodian authorities great leeway to reject and expel asylum seekers.

Human Rights Watch continues to receive credible reports of persecution of Montagnards in Vietnam, where more than 300 have been imprisoned since 2001 for peaceful expression of their religious or political views, or for trying to seek asylum in Cambodia.

“Some people were in a closed site for six years, so I think it’s very good that it’s now finished.”

Sr Denise Coghlan, OSM, country director, JRS Cambodia



Why did the Montagnards flee?

Montagnards (pronounced mohn-tan-yards) are a tribe of people from Vietnam’s Central Highlands.

Thousands have fled since 2001 after facing economic oppression and land confiscation.

Cambodian officials say it is safe for Montagnards to return to Vietnam, where many are still imprisoned for peaceful protest.

Mother hopes to give her ‘precious gift’ a better life

ANYONE LOOKING AT ZENA WOULD WANT TO BE FRIENDS WITH HER. WITH A BACKGROUND IN LAW AND LANGUAGE, SHE RADIATES SELF-CONFIDENCE AND HAS A MAGNETIC WARMTH. HER FUN, YOUTHFUL STYLE COULD EASILY BE MISINTERPRETED AS CAREFREE.

But Zena is anything but carefree. Seven months ago, she started her life over from scratch in Bangkok.

Facing execution or life imprisonment for fabricated political associations, she fled her homeland of Ethiopia for Thailand, without a word to anyone. She had visited years before and felt that she could be safe here while seeking resettlement as a refugee.

Luckier than most asylum seekers, Zena is able to teach English. Because of years of experience teaching at a language school in Ethiopia, she was able to support herself as soon as she arrived.

“I got lucky. There was a language school next to the hotel... They just hired me. That was really wonderful,” she said.

But then Zena’s health started to fail.

“I started being sick here, I was vomiting in the morning, swollen legs, my whole stomach aches all the time. I thought it was the change of weather.”

After spending all her savings on medical tests — which revealed nothing out of the ordinary — Zena was shocked to find out she was four months pregnant. It came to her then, a memory she was trying to forget.

“Everything just came to me like a flash,” said Zena, (who won’t discuss the father) “I ran a home pregnancy test and it was positive. I took it more than 20 times, thinking that it would be a dream.”

Zena was absent from her job for three days as she tried to come to grips with her situation. She considered having an abortion.

“Under normal circumstances, I wouldn’t think of doing that, but this is a very scary thing,” she said. “I cannot have a child by myself... I hated everything about it. It was crazy.”

After discovering abortion was not legal in Thailand, she considered giving her child up for adoption, but giving up a child for adoption is almost impossible for a foreigner.

Although discouraged, Zena was determined to overcome her problems and focus on daily survival. But when she returned to her job, she found that she had been fired for missing work.

Her employer was processing a work permit for her, which was canceled. Without the money needed to renew her visa to stay in Thailand, or even to pay for the next month’s rent, Zena sank into despair.

“I wanted to kill myself. God knows how many times I looked down from the balcony of my apartment, but I couldn’t get the courage,” she said. She started thinking about her life and how it should have been, and how she must find the strength to give a better life to her baby.

She found a second job teaching in Northern Thailand but was unable to hold onto it because of her deteriorating health. As her pregnancy progressed, the pain from the swelling in her legs worsened daily. Debilitating headaches, meanwhile, started to blur her vision. Forced to return to Bangkok empty-handed, Zena finally asked for help and a local NGO found her a place to stay in a shelter for a short time.

After exhausting all other options, Zena braced herself for giving birth alone in a foreign hospital and having a baby to take care of without

help or any source of income. She hoped that after the baby was born, both would be recognized refugees and could receive a stipend from UNHCR and be resettled to a western country.

Due to the volume of cases in Thailand, (over 2,000 asylum seekers at any given time) the waiting period for UNHCR to determine someone as a refugee can be anywhere from three months to a year or more.

Zena’s pregnancy was considered ‘high-risk’ because of her health problems, and she was admitted into the hospital on bed rest. Ten days later, her complications forced her to have an emergency cesarean section. The baby was rushed to the infant intensive care unit due to excessive vomiting and Zena didn’t see her baby for three days.

Her maternal instincts overcame her and she demanded to see her baby girl, Johanna.

At first sight a flood of love washed over her. “There she was in the incubator, she looked so beautiful... I even regretted that I thought about giving her up. I just wanted to keep her to myself,” she said.

Seeing her for the first time, in an incubator with an IV taped to her head and a tube in her mouth leading to her stomach, she was desperate to care for her “precious gift from God,” which is the Hebrew translation of Johanna’s name.

Zena was discharged from the hospital with her daughter, in a stable condition, 15 days after birth. JRS found Zena an apartment with other asylum-seeking women with children, and provided her with the first month’s rent and supplies for her baby.

Zena will get back on her feet and do the best she can while she awaits resettlement to another country, because Johanna has inspired hope in her life.

An overwhelming experience by anyone’s standards, and the added



Zena looks at Johanna, who has spent her first 15 days in a hospital. (Photos by Molly Mullen/ JRS Asia Pacific)

insecurity of the future, and not even a familiar culture to fall back on, Zena was still able to summon strength.

“I have no family, and no friends here but if I have a life, life should go on. I have to have a family, so the family starts from me,” she said.

Sharonne Broadhead, volunteer, Urban Refugee Project, JRS Thailand

** names changed to protect identity*



Johanna, is a Hebrew translation meaning “precious gift from God.”

Detention in Asia Pacific

JRS ASIA PACIFIC HELD A REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON DETENTION. STAFF CAME TOGETHER TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES WORKING IN DETENTION AND EXPLORED WAYS TO PROMOTE ALTERNATIVES FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS.

Oliver White is the regional communications and advocacy officer for JRS Asia Pacific. Oliver recently returned from the workshop which was focusing on solutions for Thailand, Indonesia and Australia, and will share an introduction to detention issues from his colleagues in the region.

Q: What is detention?

A: Detention is a big issue in the Asia Pacific. Essentially, detention is a means for a country to control its borders. Governments claim the right to detain people for national security and public health reasons.

UNHCR's guidelines on detention refer to detention as "Confinement within a narrowly bounded or restricted location, such as prisons, closed camps, and airport transit zones, where freedom of movement is substantially curtailed."

Because countries are using detention to deter people from migrating, refugees and asylum seekers are increasingly detained for long periods of time. They are living in poor conditions, with limited or no access to those who can assist them in gaining refugee status and resettlement.

Q: Who is detained?

A: Many different people are detained, usually for overstaying a visa, entering the country in a way that is considered illegal, or not applying for work permits. This can include refugees, asylum seekers, economic and irregular migrants, and trafficked people. Some of these people are fleeing violence, others are women and children, others have disabilities. Many have faced trauma in their home country from torture or war and as a result should not be detained.

Q: How do they end up in detention?

A: Well, there are many ways to wind up being detained. Many times, immigration authorities will round up groups of people who have overstayed their visas (see page 4) while seeking refugee status or resettlement. Others are detained upon claiming asylum at an airport and others are detained before they are deported back to their home countries.

Q: What are the conditions like in detention centres?

A: Conditions vary from centre to centre and country to country, but most people detained would agree that they are poor. Many immigration detention centres in the region have become overcrowded, placing dozens or even hundreds more people in a cell than was originally planned. With so many people living in a confined space, there are health and sanitation risks. Also, in detention centres around the world there have been documented cases of human rights abuses against detainees.

Q: What does JRS do in places of detention?

A: JRS works in detention centres in three countries. In Thailand our work has grown to providing medical and legal services and supplementing

food. We also assist people financially who cannot afford to return to their country when it is safe for them to do so.

In Australia, JRS provides pastoral services and general accompaniment in major detention centres. But JRS Australia has also been involved in providing housing for children in the community who are undergoing residential determination.

Indonesia is our newest detention project. JRS is in one detention centre, accompanying refugees and asylum seekers, advocating for improved conditions and providing exercise classes and recreational activities.

Q: What are the psychological impacts of detention?

A: There are numerous studies that document the psychological impacts of long-term detainment. Often the process of being recognised as a refugee is lengthy and asylum seekers are not well informed about the process. After becoming a refugee it can take a long time to be resettled to a third country. Months or years of not knowing one's future causes great distress. The longer people are detained, the worse their condition becomes.

Detainees can suffer from weight loss, insomnia, migraines and depression and even attempt suicide due to severe psychological stress. Detention centre staff describe how detention visibly affects the health of detainees. Unlike people sent to prison, the majority of detainees do not know when they will be released. This undoubtedly leads to psychological harm.

Q: Are there any alternatives?

A: Because of increased international awareness about detention there have been some positive steps toward detention reform. Hong Kong, Australia and Japan have all stopped or reduced the number of children detained.

A number of countries in Asia have taken steps towards providing alternatives to detention like Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Nepal and Japan. For example, in Indonesia a government directive allows refugees and asylum seekers who report regularly to immigration authorities to live in a designated area outside of a detention centre.

Q: What is JRS doing to promote alternatives in the region?

A: JRS Australia specifically has been instrumental in advocating for alternatives to detention in their country. JRS, with civil society and church groups, has worked to set up community housing for children as they undergo residential determination. They have partnered with the Red Cross and Marist Youth Care who provide youth workers to look after the children.

The Australian government has agreed to release all children by June 2011. JRS, with others, will continue to strive to find accommodation for all children living in detention.

“After 30 hours travelling in an overcrowded boat we arrived in Indonesia. Upon arrival we stayed in a forest for another day or so, until we were arrested by the police. They confiscated our money and our telephones and jailed us.”

Mohammed, detained since June, 2010

Anywhere but home

ONE MAN, LIVING IN DETENTION IN INDONESIA, WANTS TO GO ANYWHERE WHERE CAN BE A REGULAR 21-YEAR OLD AND CONTINUE HIS STUDIES.

Medan, 7 March 2011 – My name is Mohammed. I am a Hazara Afghan from the Kandahar province. I am 21.

The situation was very bad during the Taliban rule in Jaghori. The Taliban didn't allow distribution of food so my father and my brother opened a restaurant in the Kandahar province, which is the capital of the Taliban government.

We made a good income from our restaurant because many Arab people and rich Taliban soldiers ate there. Besides working at the restaurant I went to high school.

In 2001 the NATO army came to Afghanistan and sometimes NATO customers would come in and eat.

In 2004 my brother accepted a job as an interpreter with NATO. After a year the Taliban became aware my brother was an interpreter and sent my father a letter, saying, "Your son must leave his interpreter job with NATO. If not, we will kill your son and your family."

My brother and father were forced to flee. I was busy with my studies and got my diploma in 2008 and was accepted to Kabul University to study law. I was very busy with my studies because being Hazara my teachers were tougher on me than the other students, even threatening me. There are no Hazara law professors because they aren't allowed to teach.

Last year my father and brother returned to Afghanistan, after three years. On their way home to the Kandahar province, the Taliban took them because my other brother was an interpreter for NATO and because we served NATO personnel at our restaurant. We have not heard from them since.

After that I was confused and looked for any job that would help my family. I began to teach at a high school, but after three months the Taliban found out about my job and I received a letter saying, "I know you are a teacher. You teach our sons in a way that is against Taliban law. Waiting for your death."

After that letter my mother advised me to leave Afghanistan. I had to leave the country to save



Who are Hazara Afghans?

Hazara people are an ethnic group largely living in central Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. They are mostly Shia Muslims.

Over 100 years of conflict with governments, this group has fewer rights than other Afghan groups including economic sanctions, political discrimination and threats against individuals.

my life. I was hoping to find an opportunity to live and study in a democratic country like Australia.

I went to Dubai and met a smuggler who said I could go to Indonesia and then on to Australia. Because the trip by land is dangerous without any documents the smuggler told me to give him \$1,000 for safe passage. Then he told me to show him my passport. When he saw my passport he said that I did not have a visa and was illegal. He told me I had to give him \$2,000 or he would call the police. I gave him the money and after three days I made it to Indonesia.

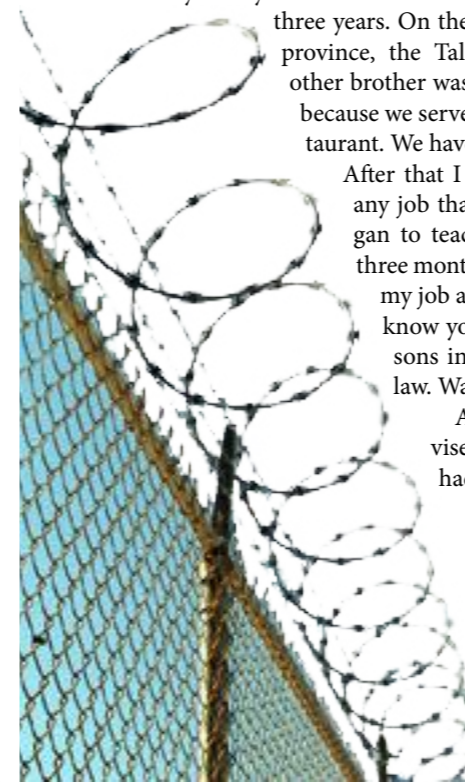
After 30 hours travelling in an overcrowded boat we arrived in Indonesia. Upon arrival we stayed in a forest for another day or so, until we were arrested by the police. They confiscated our money and our telephones and jailed us.

Since then I have been in immigration detention waiting for a solution. I can't go back to Afghanistan as I am scared for my life.

JRS provides exercise classes and movies. We are really grateful to JRS personnel because they are very kind and good people.

At the age of 21 I wish to find a chance at a proper life and continue my university studies. I am ready to get any kind of job and want to continue my law studies at the same time.

I would like to reach Australia because it is a democratic country with opportunities to study, work and make a new life. I am looking for anybody who can assist me with this wish.



Mary's House is home to many



📷 Mary has been taking in at-risk youth for 14 years. (Photo by Molly Mullen/ JRS Asia Pacific)

Mary shuffles slowly through her home. At 75 years old, it takes her longer to get around than it used to. After running her orphanage — modestly named Mary's House — for 11 years, she admits to feeling her age.

But don't let her appearance of deep-set wrinkles and her quiet speech fool you. She is still strong. She has to be. Mary has become mother to 20 orphans and has to be resilient for them.

"The children become like family," she said. "They may have had trouble before they got here, but I train them. There is no trouble here."

And the fact that there is no trouble at Mary's House is an accomplishment. A small compound in Northern Thailand, near the Burma border, there is trouble all around this safe haven. The community is near a major drug route where methamphetamine travels from Burma to Chiang Mai and Bangkok. Local people, as is the case wherever drugs are prevalent,

are at risk of addiction or involvement in the trafficking.

"It is getting worse than it used to be. But not here," she said.

Mary, who moved from Burma's Shan State 14 years ago, employs a discipline she learned as an English teacher in a convent: tough love. And it's this tough love that protects her children from the possibilities of drug trafficking, dropping out of school and sex work.

Her children must wake at 5:30 for English lessons. They must cook and clean. They must attend school and look after one another. After school, they tend the vegetable garden and practice weaving. With this schedule, she, along with her biological son, are able to keep order in a house of 15 teenagers, half boys and half girls.

"There is no secret," she said smiling. "Everything I do, I do in the open. I am strict. I am up front."

And her style has proven itself over the years. Sitting in her kitchen, she points to a portrait one of her children painted of her. He is now being educated as a monk. Near the portrait is a photo of another one of her children, standing next to President George W. Bush. She now works in politics in the United States.

"I am very proud. Very proud," Mary said,

putting the picture back on its shelf. Another five of her children have gone on to be accepted for higher education in Chiang Mai. She is trying to support them financially on her own while they study.

JRS supports Mary's work by providing seeds for the vegetable garden. The children use the vegetables in their meals and can sell the extras in town.

While she calls her home an orphanage, the title is not exactly accurate. Many of these children have a parent or relatives in the community. But they are vulnerable. Some teenagers leave school to work in the fields or become addicted to drugs. So when they need a safe place to live, she tries to keep her doors open.

But with an ever-present drug problem in the area and fewer funds to manage on every year, Mary admits to turning some children away last year.

The name Mary's House is also deceptive. It is more than a house. It is a place to learn weaving, an English school, vegetable garden, and a safe haven.

"I hope I can help some," she said. "But I am old enough already. Tired."

Still, when asked if her youngest child — nine years old — is the last she will care for, she said, "I have no idea. I don't know my future."

The risks of being a child in Northern Thailand



Both Shan refugees and members of northern hill tribes like the Lahu face difficult childhoods; dropping out, and drug and human trafficking are all risks to young people, many of whom just simply want to go to school.



📷 One Shan child stands outside a Buddhist orphanage in Northern Thailand. (Photo by Damrong Cheenmuang/ JRS Asia Pacific)



Manut Saifa, age 11 harvests tomatoes in the orphanage's garden. He is one of 20 Shan children living here. (Photo by Don Doll, SJ)



Students eat lunch at Lak Tang primary school. (Photo by Oliver White/ JRS Asia Pacific)



A young girl shade herself from the sun as she walks down the main dirt road at Kung Jor temporary shelter, where 500 refugees from Burma's Shan State live. While protected from Burma's military, many are not protected from dangerous or illegal work. (Photo Molly Mullen/ JRS Asia Pacific)

Growing up in the Shan area of Northern Thailand is not easy. Without legal papers, work is hard to find, so from birth many are resigned to a life of – at best – manual field labour, or – at worst – drug trafficking, prostitution or prison.

“There’s a problem here with drugs and prostitution,” explained Mr Kamlek, a caretaker at a local orphanage for at-risk youth.

The Shan people are an ethnic minority of northern Burma. In 1962 when Burma’s democratically elected government was overthrown, Shan State was abolished. Since then, this group has been treated as second-class citizens, clashing with the Burmese military over the past 40 years. Conflict, systematic human rights abuses and repressive policies caused thousands of Shan refugees to seek protection in Thailand.

“SOME YEARS ORPHANS APPROACH US BUT WE CANNOT TAKE THEM. WE DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO TAKE CARE OF EVERYONE... THIS MEANS THEY ARE FORCED TO WORK.”

But the Thai government does not recognise the Shan people as refugees and has not allowed them to set up refugee camps along the border. Still, nearly 500 Shan people reside in an unofficial camp called Kung Jor, a few dozen bamboo homes on a dusty hill.

They are not permitted to register with the authorities, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, unable to access social welfare programmes or seek resettlement. Many are forced to depend on others or enter Thailand’s unskilled labour market as migrant workers. They do difficult and dangerous work for less than US\$3 a day.

But outside of the Kung Jor camp, live other groups of vulnerable people such as the Lahu. The Lahu are hill tribe people from Northern Thailand. They live in the same community as the Shan, and though they have lived in this country for generations, they are still considered legally as second-class citizens. Some are forced to earn money from trafficking methamphetamine or shabu, as it is known in Thailand. The border area near Wiang Haeng is a notorious drug smuggling route from Burma into Thailand. The risks are high with Thailand regularly administering the death penalty for serious drug related crimes.

“When they sell drugs it has a big effect on the whole family, but it is hard to find work in the villages, even on the farms. Drug smuggling is often their only option to earn money,” Mr Kamlek said.

His orphanage, supported by JRS, takes in at-risk children from Burma and surrounding communities, ensuring their safety and education.

He along with his staff are trying to protect them not only from drugs; HIV and AIDS is also a serious problem, destroying families and leaving children without parents.

“Some Lahu women and young girls are forced to work as prostitutes in Chiang Mai and they carry the disease back to the village,” he said. “The parents of two children in this orphanage died from AIDS.”

Mr Kamlek and his team seem at a loss on how to deal with these

intractable problems and their devastating impact on the community.

“These two problems will create more orphans in the district and surrounding villages,” Mr Kamlek said, not knowing how he and his team can accommodate any more children.

Risk faced by children and support for orphanages

Some children join their parents to escape the conflict and poverty, making it hard for them to claim citizenship in Burma. Others are born in Thailand, never seeing their homeland. Because they are stateless they have limited access to education, health care and freedom of movement.

For those without a safe place to live, Lahu orphanage offers some refuge. Perched upon a dusty hillside and overlooking an ostensibly quiet village called Kae Noi, the orphanage is home to 27 children. Not all the children are without parents but left because of problems at home. “The orphanage protects the children from social and family problems and also poverty,” Mr Kamlek said.

Those children fortunate enough to have a bed at the any of the area’s

orphanages are the lucky ones. Children without parents who live in the village have to work for a host family and are unable to attend school.

“Some ask to stay here over night because they are scared to return to the host family, especially if the work is unfinished,” Mr Kamlek said.

Significant funding cuts forced the caretakers and teachers to find alternative sources of income. The decision to grow mushrooms and vegetables was supported by JRS with seedling funding for equipment, materials and agricultural expertise. The Lahu orphanage now grows enough vegetables to feed everyone and even has some left over to sell in the village to raise extra funds. However, money is limited and the orphanage is unable to care for every child in need.

“Some years orphans approach us but we cannot take them. We do not have the resources to take care of everyone. They end up staying with someone in the village. This means they are forced to work instead of having access to real education,” Mr Kamlek said.

Support for schools

Although Thailand mandates education for all children, regardless of their status, many do not speak enough Thai to keep up in class, or cannot afford the expenses like uniforms and transportation.

Through the generosity of donors, JRS provides financial assistance and teacher training to three schools in the area, agricultural materials and support for a livelihood project in Lak Tang Primary school. This school now produces enough mushrooms and vegetables to feed the students and supplements the schools’ income. JRS provides scholarships for children most at risk from dropping out to reduce the risk of trafficking, child labour and prostitution.

Wi Lai Poli is an eighth grade student who was awarded a scholarship by JRS so she could continue her studies. Despite being so young, Wi Lai is acutely aware of the



Who does JRS serve in this project?

Shan: from Burma’s Shan State, many fled after violence broke out between Shan militias and the military. They now live unregistered in Thailand, unable to find legal work and unable to move.

Lahu: A Thai Northern hill tribe with fewer rights than most Thai people. This leaves children and families at risk to find alternate forms of income.

importance of school.

“If I was not at school I would work in the farm or go to Chiang Mai,” Wi Lai said.

Inspired by her English and maths teacher Wi Lai not only wants to continue her secondary education but would like to make it her vocation.

“I want to be an English teacher. I want to share my knowledge with others like me.”

JRS currently provides 18 scholarships a year. Last year over 200 students applied. To maintain social harmony in the community JRS also shares 20 percent of scholarships with Thai children.

While the situation for Shan and Lahu children remains complex and dangerous, community leaders remain dedicated to the cause. A Shan community leader has organised English classes for the community, teachers remain dedicated to seeing their students continue their education, and those running orphanages are determined to keep their children safe. While a bright future may seem hard to see, both community leaders and dedicated students refuse to give up.

Oliver White, regional communications and advocacy officer
* names changed to protect identity



An unfocused future



AFTER 25 YEARS AS REFUGEES FROM INDONESIA, THESE 12,000 WEST PAPUANS MUST DECIDE THEIR FUTURE: LIFE IN THE CAMP, INTEGRATING INTO PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S SOCIETY OR ATTEMPTING TO FREE WEST PAPUA FROM INDONESIAN CONTROL AND MOVE HOME.

From the banks of the Fly River in the industrial township of Kiunga, I watch Martina standing motionless, perfectly balanced at the front of the dug-out canoe as it glides gracefully towards me.

Martina's house is set amongst a cluster of about 25 built on the spillway of the Fly River, just off the main road of Kiunga in Papua New Guinea's Western Province. With 97% of land in PNG owned by the indigenous people, and 80 percent of the population relying on the land for their daily needs, there is little land available for purchase (even if you can afford it). So the refugees who come to town to be closer to services and employment prospects settle on what unclaimed land they can find.

What created refugees in PNG

Martina is one of more than 800 West Papuan refugees living in the remote PNG town, her parents having fled across the Indonesian-PNG border along with nearly 12,000 others between 1984 and 1986. They sought refuge from threatened and real violence from both the Indonesian military and the PNG separatist group. Some fled to escape from Indonesia's oppressive policies which left Papuans feeling like second-class citizens in their own land, others hoped to bring international attention and support to their resistance of Indonesian occupation.

More than 25 years on, approximately 2,500 refugees now live in East Awin, the official camp established by the PNG government in an attempt to move the refugees away from the border. The 15 km tract of land at East Awin site was carved out of the dense jungle.

Approximately 5,000 refugees refused the PNG government's instruction to "either move to East Awin or return to Indonesia" preferring to stay in the border areas, close to their traditional land and amongst people who share the same language and culture. Even the removal of government and UNHCR services did not persuade them to move. Today, the Catholic Diocese of



Wren Chadwick, information officer for JRS Papua New Guinea. (Photo by Sr Maureen Sexton)

Daru-Kiunga is the main provider of basic health and education services to refugees in these areas. In some places, the fast-growing refugee communities now outnumber their local hosts, and more and more land is required to sustain them.

The border refugees, like the PNG locals around them, live a subsistence lifestyle, growing sweet potatoes, bananas, cassava, peanuts and sago. Unlike many of the locals, however, they do not have access to the regular compensation payments made to communities who live along the rivers polluted by the Ok Tedi gold and copper mine which generates significant income for PNG. While many refugees complain about the unfairness of this arrangement — after all they are living with the daily impact of the pollution — many observers remark on the industriousness of the refugee communities who have not grown dependent on the cash hand-outs from the mine.

The remaining 2,500 refugees are scattered around PNG's cities and towns. Those in Kiunga, have come to be closer to schools, hospitals, markets and prospects for employment. Employment is hard to come by, however, and many in town have little or no access to land for food gardens. Many, like Martina's family, rely on the small income raised by selling doughnuts, betel-nut, or icy-poles from small tables set up beside the dusty road to pay for food, clothes and school fees.

The Catholic church and JRS

The Catholic Church has a long history of providing assistance to refugees in PNG. As a major partner in the early relief efforts, it distributed food relief and other basic supplies and was a significant advocate for the humane treatment of refugees by the PNG government. The Diocese of Daru-Kiunga continues, in partnership with NGOs to advocate with



Refugees from West Papua in Kiunga Diocese live in houses on stilts anticipating flooding. (photo by Peter Balleis SJ/ JRS International)

and on behalf of refugees and, through programs such as teacher training, maternal health, adult literacy and student sponsorships, to ensure their basic needs are met.

Since 2008 JRS has been working in partnership with the Diocese of Daru-Kiunga to provide accurate information to refugees about their rights and options for the future, to strengthen the Diocese's capacity to advocate for refugees, and with the Bishop, to advocate for the rights and needs of refugees at national and international levels. To this end, JRS information and advocacy officers have visited the remote refugee settlements up and down the border to collect information, conducted training with Diocesan personnel, published newsletters for refugees, and worked with UNHCR and all levels of government to identify and address issues of concern to refugees.

The future for West Papuan refugees

The tables turn slowly in PNG, however, and positive change can be a long time coming. What is the durable solution to this protracted refugee situation? Generally, in refugee situations, voluntary repatriation is the preferred option, where possible. A number of refugees have indeed returned to West Papua on Indonesian-sponsored aircraft in repatriation exercises organised by the Indonesian and PNG Government. Indonesia promotes voluntary returns, hoping to show to the international community that West Papuans have no reason to seek refuge. UNHCR is not yet satisfied that the conditions necessary for voluntary return exist, so

has not supported such exercises. With outside journalists and human rights organisations prevented from entering West Papua, it is difficult to know how these returnees fare.

For the majority of West Papuan refugees, return is not something they will do voluntarily, at least not until they achieve their political as-

piration of an independent West Papua. For these refugees, local integration is the most likely durable solution. Indeed, after more than 24 years, this integration is well underway. As the Bishop of Daru-Kiunga puts it, "The gradual, silent Melanesian-style process of integration through power-struggles, exchanges, alliances and inter-marriage is already taking place." Local integration is not without its challenges, however. Permanent, regularised access to land, for instance, is a major issue of concern for both refugees and their host communities, with no easy solution.

Access to PNG citizenship is another obstacle to overcome, albeit with a more straight-forward solution. Despite fulfilling the residency requirement for citizenship, the current fee of K10,000 (AU\$4,500) is prohibitive for all but the most fortunate refugee. Additionally, border refugees are currently not eligible given that their status has not been regularised. These factors along with the operation of Indonesian law have left most refugees, including their children who were born in PNG, stateless. One refugee said "If they can't give me citizenship, I'm ok with that because I'm already old, but at least give my children a country to belong to." Other refugees only want to be a citizen of a free West Papua.

Although resource-rich (because of the Ok Tedi gold and copper mine), the dispersed population, lack of service infrastructure and difficult-to-access rural population creates many obstacles to service provision and economic development for its residents. As a result, the Western Province has some of the highest rates of poverty, and performs among the lowest in terms of health and education statistics.

Along with many refugees and locals, Martina is one of the 40% of grade 10 students who did not get high enough grades to obtain one of the limited number of places in grade 11. For these young people, opportunities are limited. Martina is not deterred, however. She is taking any opportunity she can — attending JRS journalism sessions to produce content for the JRS newsletter and improve her English skills has inspired her try to upgrade her school marks by correspondence, and hopes to secure a place at a teachers' college.

Wren Chadwick, JRS information and advocacy officer in PNG.



To read the extended version of this feature, find the March issue of *Servir*, the JRS International publication, at www.jrs.net

A PHOTO STORY

When school interferes with family income

The life and dilemma for Burmese economic migrants in Ranong, Thailand



Dynamics of providing education

Ranong is a small coastal town. Population 25,000, most people earn their income from the sea — working in hotels for tourists stopping off before heading to an island or into Burma; working on fishing boats for weeks at a time to haul in squid, prawns and fish; working in fish processing factories to prepare the meat for distribution all over Thailand; or working in local shops and stands selling the fresh fish.


While these are all Thai-owned businesses, the economy here sustains itself on Burmese workers who either migrate permanently for work in factories, or seasonally to work on fishing boats.

JRS has been dedicated to providing education to the children of these economic migrants, but it has been an uphill battle since establishing six learning centres in 2000.

While JRS wishes to provide education for all young people, it must look at a bigger picture. Young people are pressured to work starting at age 10 to contribute to the family financially. Many uneducated parents may not see the value in having their children finish secondary or even primary education when their work options are limited to factory, fishing or sales work.

Students only receive an education certificate if they go to Thai schools, but many Burmese families — although legally allowed — are financially restricted from formal education. Besides, many parents would rather keep their children in JRS learning centres, where they learn Burmese language and culture along with Thai. But without a certificate their education means little more than the knowledge they possess and they are resigned to a life of factory and fishing work.

Photo story by Oliver White and Molly Mullen

 Nearly 300 students attend classes at Sea Dragon learning centre in Ranong. Since it's so close to the sea, when it rains, the courtyard turns into a stream and students and teachers have to raft to the door. While education is important, the larger picture of life in Ranong is complex and disjointed.



“(My son) said he would drop out and work at the factory to help pay for his little brother to go to school, but we want him to continue his education... but I am not sure if he will be able to continue his school after next year because of the fee.”
Mother of one student at a JRS-run school. The student has since left school.



Top: Men prepare to head back to shore from fishing boats. In Ranong, Thailand, the major business is fishing. Seasonally, thousands of Burmese economic migrants move across the border to Ranong to work on fishing boats and in factories. The fish are sent all over Thailand.

Above: Two fishing boats head back to Ranong. “I don’t want my children to be like us – we did not get an education in Burma – we want them to have an education,” said one mother who works in a fish factory. She sends both of her sons to JRS learning centres even though they are of age (12) to work. One person in a fish factory can bring in 4,000 baht (US\$132) a month.

Above right: At Ban Klang learning centre three classes are conducted in one room. “If I were headmaster, I would put partitions in the classes ... Sometimes it’s too loud and difficult to concentrate. I do most of my studying at home,” 10-year-old Khin Chor Su said.

Right: Khin Chor Su with her mother, who often works 12-hour shifts at a fruit stand so her children don’t have to. To read more about this exceptional student, go to www.jrsap.org



Left: Students shoot marbles after school outside Soi Samakki learning centre, supported by JRS. “Some students drop out of school. They work in construction or in the fish and prawn factories to help support their families. I would rather be learning. If I study in school then when I have a job later, people will not look down on me,” said one fourth grade student.



A student hula hoops during her lunch break at Lotus Pond learning centre.



Fr Sacha baptises Risen, a Sri Lankan baby born in detention. (Photo by Karl Schwerdfeger)

Choosing to live with hope

Sacha Bermudez-Goldman, SJ, reflects on the lessons he has learned from refugees during his two years as country director of JRS Australia.



to the detention centre in Sydney. There I visited them every week for another six months.

When the baby was born, we agreed to baptise him as soon as they were granted protection and were let out. They decided to name their son Risen partly because he was born during the first week of Easter, but also because for them this name encapsulated the hope they had kept alive, against all odds, of a new life in a new and peaceful country. I have found this hope kept alive in the hearts of most of the asylum seekers and refugees I have had the privilege to meet.

I used to ask myself and sometimes others, "How are you able to do this, to keep on hoping despite so many obstacles and seemingly insurmountable challenges?" until one day a refugee friend said to me "I have lost everything, but the one thing I choose not to lose is hope. It is the one choice I have left and I will hold on to it as long as

The two words that come to mind when I reflect on the people I have met in my last two years with JRS are hope and generosity.

Recently, I baptised a beautiful baby boy, born to a Sri Lankan couple during their time in detention. I had first met them on Christmas Island, where they were taken and kept for four months before being transferred

I am sane."

During these past couple of years, I have also been struck by the constant generosity of those who are part of the wider JRS community: our staff, volunteers, donors, supporters, friends and the asylum seekers and refugees themselves who despite their own struggles are often able to care lovingly for one another. Earlier this year, I was giving a talk to a group of kindergarten students about the plight of refugees. I was not sure how much they had grasped, until a five-year old boy raised his hand and said "Father, if the refugees don't have a place to stay, they can all come and stay with me and my family."

Easy solution! Or perhaps not, but the innocence of that remark, and the incredible spirit of generosity it contained, represented for me an expression of what is possible if we all allow this generous spirit to imbue our lives.

I believe one of the great gifts JRS offers is the possibility for both this hope and generosity to be maintained and to flourish, and that is a great benefit for those we accompany, serve and strive to give a voice. But it is also a great gift for us, for it means that we too live our own lives in hope and surrounded by charity, big-heartedness and kindness.

Fr Sacha has finished his time with JRS. JRS Australia's new country director is Fr Aloysius Mowe SJ.

This is one of many reflections shared in JRS Asia Pacific's special 30 year publication, available at www.jrsap.org



“João was a great worker in the village before he went blind; he never tired from helping others.”

Neighbour from Hera village, Timor Leste



João lived in Hera Village his entire life, many years blind and unable to fully care for himself. (Photo by Mario/ JRS Timor Leste)

Neighbours come together to remember a friend

While João was never able to enjoy the home he was going to build with his neighbours, the entire village came together to build in his honor. He died before construction was able to begin, so his friends used the supplies to build him a coffin and grave marker.

"We have great memories of João. We remember the good company that João gave the community at night. João sang, told stories and was usually happy despite the disability he had," one neighbour said.

João was living alone in Hera Village. As an old man who had lost his sight he depended on neighbours to assist him. JRS supplied him with materials to build a new home. Because he was blind his friends in the village decided to

build the house for him. João was born in 1944 in Hera Village. He worked as an iron welder for many years, earning enough to sustain himself.

In 1983 he realised his vision was becoming unclear and not so long after he lost his sight completely. His blindness came from welding without proper eye safety. With help from his friends he bought traditional medicines to treat his eyes and cured his sight. His friends urged him to find other work. But in 1994 he went back to his iron-welding job because he was skilled and earned good money. Years later he lost his sight again and remained blind.

João had no family to lean on and lived alone. When JRS workers met João they noticed his home was bare. JRS then decided to help him when implementing its building activity programmes in the village. JRS decided to assist João construct his house and visited regularly; he said he felt very happy because although JRS were not his family or neighbours, it was good to know that people were around to help others to live and enjoy their lives.

➔ To read more Timor Leste voices go to www.jrsap.org

With the building materials in place, local authorities and youth groups in the village started to build the foundation and walls of his house. He died before it was completed.

"João seemed well at the time he died. He was singing with the children and suddenly fell ill and went into the house, and he didn't recover," one neighbour said.

With permission from the community JRS decided to use the remaining construction materials to build his grave. Members of the community who were helping João build his home stopped and helped complete one final project for their neighbour.

"João was a great worker in the village before he went blind; he never tired from helping others," one neighbour remembered.

Mario, JRS' Timor-Leste field officer

Starting over

One JRS livelihoods project in the Philippines inspires hope to those who have been displaced for more than a decade. With funds for farming, some are able to start their lives over.



The Zaman family have seen a lot over the past 11 years.

Their home in a border village of Munai, Lanao del Norte became one of many war zones in 2000, when then President Estrada declared an “all out war” on the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The Moro people, around 20 percent of the Philippines’ population, have been seeking self-determination for decades. There has been no peaceful resolution and in 2000 the violence displaced the Zaman family and close to a million people in Mindanao.

Taralbi Zaman, his wife and three children crossed the provincial border to safety. They tried to return home but violence continues to break out over the years, and they decided to remain IDPs in a safe community rather than risking their lives at home.

Although their dream to return home has not yet been realised, their wish to be self-sufficient again has. “This is my dream; to own a cow,”

Taralbi said.

In July 2010, the couple were one of the 120 household recipients of a JRS livelihood program for IDPs in Lanao facilitated by the JRS local partner, the Muslim-Christian Agency for Advocacy, Relief and Development, Inc. The couple used the cash grant to plant corn on the 1.25 hectares of land they leased.

“I am grateful for the grant from JRS and MuCARRD,” Taralbi said.

Under normal circumstances, he would have to take a loan with high interest in order to farm. By a stroke of luck the corn price rose during harvest time and Taralbi and Dayano were able to purchase a calf from their corn produce. They are looking forward to sharing this blessing with other IDPs in the community.

JRS has been working to create livelihood projects for IDPs since last year, focusing extensively on providing opportunities to households with mothers as the head, since they are most vulnerable.

While there are thousands of families still without a livelihood, this is just the beginning of JRS’ work in the area.

And this is also just the beginning for IDPs including the Zamans to rebuild their lives and help others. Because after receiving assistance, they are determined to assist other Moro IDPs.

“When this cow begets an offspring, I want to share it with others,” he said.

Naidz Gauraki, Panginam O Masa-Mu-CARRD with Louie Bacomo, programme officer, JRS Asia Pacific



The ruins of a family house in Kalikuning destroyed by the Mt Merapi eruption November 2011. This is just one of many homes either destroyed or drowned in ash and mud. No new settlement is allowed in this area yet. (Photo by Lars Stenger/ JRS Indonesia)

Unable to rebuild

Six months after the initial eruption, Indonesia’s most active volcano still prevents people from returning to rebuild their homes and lives on its dangerous slopes.

After the initial shock of more than 100,000 people losing their homes, JRS responded to the aftershock: cold lava.

After the Mt Merapi eruptions, more and more people along the slopes of the volcano lost their houses due to the destructive force called “cold lava” where rivers wash down volcanic ash, stones and other mate-

rial. JRS continued to provide support to 3,752 of these newly displaced in some of the 13 government-managed camps.

JRS has been working with those displaced from the Mt Merapi disaster since November 2010, shortly after the volcano erupted in late October. Mt Merapi is the most active of 129 volcanoes in Indonesia and during its latest eruption initially caused over 136,585 people to leave their homes and killed 322 others.

JRS responded to the crisis, providing support where it was aware of gaps in the government and NGOs programmes.

JRS provided food, medicine, sleeping mats, sanitary products and clothing through distribution points for displaced living outside of the official camps and directly to people sheltered in surrounding villages.

With the help of 177 volunteers JRS assisted 75,957 IDPs and returnees during the initial four months.

The government set up temporary shelters away from the evacuation radius from the volcano, but thousands of people instead went to surrounding villages and were taken in by local villagers. While many villagers said they were happy to assist those displaced, they did not have the capacity or income to care for them.

JRS Indonesia finished its emergency response but continues to stay in contact with the displaced and shares information on their needs and concerns in local coordination meetings with authorities.

Lars Stenger, communications and advocacy officer, JRS Indonesia



You can access Diakonia online

JRS Asia Pacific has relaunched its website with a new design and new features to help you better access news updates about displaced people in the region. You can read back issues of Diakonia, get information about specific projects and read content as soon as it is written.

You can still access the site at
www.jrsap.org



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