



JRS Report 2010

2010 marked the 30th anniversary of JRS. If annual reports are meant to showcase the success of an organisation, and to make a case for its continued existence, then 2010 must be marked down as yet another year of disappointment for JRS: we continue to exist when we would rather not. As Fr Peter Balleis SJ, the Director of JRS International, put it during his visit to Australia to commemorate the anniversary, 'It would be better if JRS didn't exist'. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection and due process as a matter of course, without the need for organisations such as JRS to advocate on their

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behalf and provide assistance because governments will not do what is necessary.

In his letter to the Society of Jesus establishing JRS on 14 November 1980, Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ, the then Superior General of the Jesuits, wrote, 'St Ignatius called us to go anywhere we are most needed for the greater service of God. The spiritual as well as material need of nearly 16 million refugees

throughout the world today could scarcely be greater. God is calling us through these helpless people. We should consider the chance of being able to assist them a privilege that will, in turn, bring great blessings to ourselves and our Society.'

Not least among these blessings have been your support and friendship. From the donors who reached deep into your pockets to help fund our projects to the boys at St Aloysius' Junior School in Sydney who now help mail Link, your compassion towards our refugee sisters and brothers has been a source of encouragement and hope for JRS and those whom we serve.



Year 6 students at St Aloysius College, Milsons Point, help the Director of JRS, Fr Aloysius Mowe SJ with the mail-out of Link.

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Shelter Project

In 2010 JRS expanded its accommodation service to five properties by adding two new houses, one in Manly for community-based asylum seekers, and the other for unaccompanied minors living in community detention. Securing the property in Manly has made it possible for us to offer housing to women and families, an extremely vulnerable group of asylum seekers living in the community.

It was a year of social activities beginning with Harmony Day in March, a photography and art exhibition by the asylum seekers as part of Refugee Week, a house-warming for our new house in Manly, and a Christmas harbour cruise arranged by St Canice's Parish. The inner west group of Amnesty International hosted a BBQ for the asylum seekers in Summer Hill, and some of the refugees participated in a Social Leadership Workshop run by the Benevolent Society.

With the excellent support of our volunteers we were thrilled to have four of our refugees offered placements in a Refugee Traineeship Program run by St Vincent's and Mater Health Sydney. The continued dedication of our volunteers in providing direct accompaniment to the asylum seekers and refugees we support has been outstanding.

An evaluation of the project was undertaken, and showed the project to be achieving excellent results and continuing to meet the essential needs of asylum seekers. One resident said: 'Giving me shelter was like getting a million dollars'. We engaged in many inter-agency forums throughout the year, and worked with other agencies to advocate for better outcomes for asylum seekers and refugees. All in all, it was a very rewarding and successful year.



Serdar, a refugee, with a tiny resident of JRS's Manly shelter.

Detention Issues

The Sisters of Mercy have been at the heart of our pastoral accompaniment of asylum seekers in detention. Sr Maureen Lohrey began work on Christmas Island at the end of 2009, and in 2010 Srs Joan Kelleher, Lizzie Finnerty and Carmel Setford provided much-valued pastoral support during a difficult time for the detainees there which culminated in the terrible events of 15 December 2010 when a boat carrying around 90 asylum seekers sank off the coast of the island.

In October JRS expanded its pastoral care services to asylum seekers in Curtin Detention Centre in WA. Once again it was the Sisters of Mercy who made this possible, in the persons of Srs Jackie Ford and Anne McDonnell.

Fr Sacha Bermudez-Goldman SJ, who was at that time Director of JRS, and volunteers continued to visit Villawood Detention Centre in the west of Sydney to provide regular religious and pastoral services to the asylum seekers there.

Pacific Displacement

Dr Maryanne Loughry, Associate Director of JRS, continued her work on the JRS Pacific Displacement Project. The project focuses on displacement due to climate change, the psychological and social effects of this displacement, and how to map the needs of the people being displaced, such as the population of the Carteret Islands who are being moved to Bougainville on the Papua New

Guinea mainland. Maryanne is also developing a network of informants on displacement in the region, and developing policy and advocating with and for those being displaced. To further these ends she worked with the UNHCR in the region, spoke at meetings and conferences in Australia and abroad, and published research papers using the data collected. She visited Bougainville at the end of 2010 for further research.

Support of International projects

While most of the work of JRS Australia at present is focused on the needs of asylum seekers in Australia, we have continued to contribute to the needs of refugees in other countries through the support of our donors and, very significantly, the outstandingly generous contributions made by Jesuit Mission. JRS projects in the Southern and Eastern regions of Africa, the Thai-Burma border, and Cambodia were all beneficiaries of your generosity. Education and training opportunities for refugees have been a particular focus for JRS International projects in recent years: such opportunities give hope to the refugees by opening up for them the possibilities of a self-sustained future.

Advocacy and Policy

The JRS Youth Award, which awards prizes for the best multi-media projects that focus on the plight of refugees, was just one aspect of the many activities organised by JRS that involved young people in schools, parishes and universities. If the current toxic nature of the refugee debate in Australia is to be improved, then it is this rising generation that needs to be engaged.

At both state and national levels, JRS participated in information-sharing and advocacy activities with the government as well as with NGOs and academic institutions. The NSW Detention Centre Working Group, the Asylum Seeker Inter-agency forum, the Housing, Health and Welfare Group, the DIAC-NGO forum, and the NSW Asylum Seeker and Refugee Forum were just a few of the policy and advocacy networks that JRS participated in regularly.

Dr Maryanne Loughry continues to serve on the Minister of Immigration's advisory Council for Immigration Services and Status Resolution, and is thus able to bring her expertise and experience to the government's policy deliberations.

International placements

Australians were well-represented overseas in 2010: Lian Yong volunteered on refugee issues with JRS Cambodia, Wren Chadwick worked as an advocacy officer with West Papuan refugees living in PNG, Taya Hunt undertook a refugee research project at JRS in Bangkok and Oliver White was appointed Regional Communication Advocacy Officer for JRS Asia Pacific.

Fr David Holdcroft SJ, former Director of JRS Australia, was appointed Regional Director of JRS Southern Africa, a job which sees him managing refugee projects in five countries in the region. Mercy Sister Denise Coghlan continued to serve as the Director of JRS Cambodia, and Fr Chris Jenkins SJ spent time in Kakuma refugee camp in north-western Kenya, serving in a pastoral role and overseeing the implementation of a refugee diploma program.

Staff and Volunteers

JRS in partnership with Marist Youth Care (MYC) piloted a project announced by the government in October 2010 to take unaccompanied minors out of immigration detention centres and place them in the community. Two new staff members joined JRS to work in this project: Jacqui Lord became the lead case worker for the project, working across two properties (a JRS house and an MYC house), while Sr Kathleen Moran RSM came on board as a part-time project assistant with special responsibility for meaningful activities for the young asylum seekers.

JRS has for a long time advocated for alternatives to the detention regime in Australia which has been proved to have

serious negative effects on the mental health and general welfare of vulnerable asylum seekers. The community detention project, while still being a form of detention and therefore not the ideal environment for asylum seekers having their refugee status assessed, nevertheless has ameliorated for these young persons the worse elements of Australia's indefensible immigration detention policy.

JRS's Volunteer Coordinator, Anne Porter, joined us in June 2010. She oversees a growing number of volunteers who visit people in Villawood Detention Centre in a pastoral role, and undertake a variety of tasks with the Shelter Project, including the provision of practical support for refugees and asylum seekers.

Fundraising activities

Guests at the annual Melbourne Cup Luncheon in Sydney heard the moving story of a Sri Lankan asylum seeker who came to Australia with his wife via Christmas Island, a journey that was eased by JRS volunteers who regularly visited the couple while they were in detention. The event was just one of a number held throughout 2010 that raised thousands of dollars for JRS projects both in Australia and abroad. Other fixtures on the JRS calendar drew enthusiastic crowds, including the annual JRS Winter Solstice Ball, the Xavier Social Justice Network Refugee Week Dinner, the JRS Melbourne Dinner, the JRS Brisbane Ball and the second annual concert for Burmese refugees held in Perth.

Conclusion

JRS has been fortunate in having a strong and supportive Board that has brought wide-ranging expertise to the complex policy and operational work of JRS. In 2010 we sadly saw the departure of two board members, Patrizia Ravalico and Damian Roche. They were replaced by Maya Cranitch and Eve Lester. Maya has been involved in education policy and professional development programs for teachers, among other things, and is currently engaged in projects for refugees on the Thai-Burma border. Eve's expertise is in law and human rights, and she has worked for JRS in Cambodia, the UNHCR in Geneva, and Amnesty International.

Our board, staff, pastoral workers and volunteers continue to be inspired by the invitation of Fr Arrupe 30 years ago. He was right: this service to and for refugees is a privilege; and the refugees and you, our supporters, are a blessing to us, poured out a hundredfold.

Upcoming Events

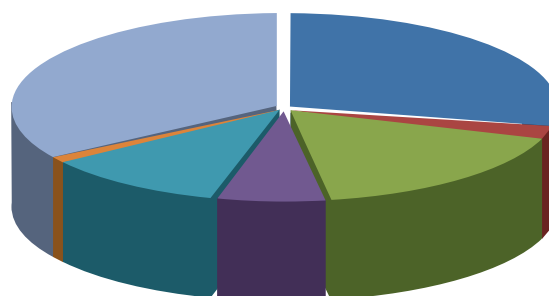
4 September 2011: Burmese Refugee Charity Concert in **Melbourne**. The Brunswick Green, 313 Sydney Road, Brunswick, 2pm. Entry is \$15 and the line-up includes Reflejos, Fighting Mongoose and Josh Last.

October: JRS Volunteers get-together in Sydney. Date **TBA**.

1 November: Melbourne Cup Luncheon. Tickets can be booked online at www.jrs.org.au or by phoning 02 9356 3888.

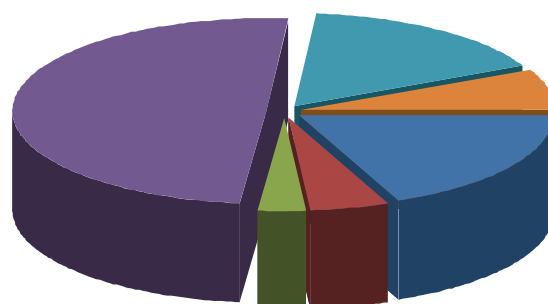
8 December: JRS Christmas party. This annual event at which volunteers, staff, refugees, asylum seekers and friends of JRS come together to celebrate the successes of the past year will be held at 24 Roslyn St, Kings Cross from 7pm.

2010 JRS Income



General Donations	28%
Bank Interest	2%
Grants	17%
Talks, Publications, Training, Consultancy	7%
Fundraising for Australia	11%
Sundry Income	1%
Specific Project Donations	34%
Total Income	\$582,076

2010 JRS Expenditure



Bookkeeping, Rent, Office Costs	19%
Communication	5%
Detention Issues	3%
Shelter Project	49%
Research and Advocacy	17%
Fund Raising	7%
Total Expenditure	\$521,351

If undeliverable return to:

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Kings Cross NSW 1340

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