

diakonia

Serving refugees | sharing their voices



JRS IN ASIA PACIFIC

Since 1980, JRS Asia Pacific has accompanied, served, and advocated the cause of refugees and other forcibly displaced people. p. 01

WALK WITH REFUGEE

In the past 40 years, JRS always walk with refugees along their journey. p. 02

MEET OUR STAFF

Our staff have committed to assure well-being and protection of displaced people. Our services are the most evident way to express our solidarity. p. 06

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

by *Louie Bacomo*

Forty years of facing change through compassion

A Jesuit once said, "Change is not a problem as long as people know where they are going." JRS at 40 years certainly does not claim knowledge of the future but we have welcomed changes and remained committed to our core mission to accompany, serve and advocate the cause of forcibly displaced persons.

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER



— LOUIE BACOMO

JRS Asia Pacific Director

Forty years of facing change through compassion

A Jesuit once said, "Change is not a problem as long as people know where they are going." JRS at 40 years certainly does not claim knowledge of the future but we have welcomed changes and remained committed to our core mission to accompany, serve and advocate the cause of forcibly displaced persons. In Asia Pacific, this meant, in the last decade, reaching out to more countries while strengthening local governance; weaning out projects to partners and serving communities in new frontiers. We are now serving the forcibly displaced in eight countries.

We have witnessed changes in refugee lives and accompanied them through their resettlement and adjustment to a third country, detention and release in their country of asylum, welcoming a newborn even as parents are living in limbo, acquiring education and skills to broaden their opportunities. Many of these refugees are known to us personally. They are co-workers, friends, and people we serve. JRS staff and refugees are both beneficiaries of this humanitarian mission—the experience and learning to become more human and humane to one another.

This experience of our mission is an experience of compassion. As we read the testimony of refugees and staff in this issue, we recognize the human and spiritual sources of this compassion. It comes from the support we receive from those around and among us and from the Supreme Compassion that emanates from beyond our own capabilities to muster in the face of heartbreaking human suffering. We are grateful for this grace.

JRS, too, has gone through changes in response to the refugee context. JRS has evolved from a trailblazing apostolate of Jesuits, religious congregation, lay volunteers supported by a small, nimble support structure to a growing organization that strives to be present in the peripheries and forgotten places. We keep true to our mission of responding to the greatest needs, to work where a greater good can be achieved and be in situations where no one is present. We keep true to our mission of responding to the greatest needs, to work where a greater good can be achieved and be in situations where no one is present. This mission criteria has carved the contours of our organization. And so, deciding to exit and close an engagement at the right time is part of our apostolic thrust. We are not a "structure-centered" organization; our growth is mission-driven.

As we look at how forced displacement has increased and intensified fueled by conflict, climate and consumerism, we know that change will continue to confront JRS. Therefore, let me end with another quote on managing change from another Jesuit, "Change takes time and so, there is no time to lose." We are all called to fulfill our mission with urgency and compassion.



JRS IN ASIA PACIFIC

Since 1980, JRS Asia Pacific has accompanied, served, and advocated the cause of refugees and other forcibly displaced people, that they may heal, learn and determine their own future. JRS is currently found in 56 countries around the world, including 8 countries in Asia Pacific, serving refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in conflict zones, detention centres, on remote borders, and in busy cities. At the heart of our service to refugees is our commitment with them throughout their experience of displacement. We advocate with refugees to secure their rights and protect the most vulnerable.

WALK WITH REFUGEES

In the past 40 years, JRS walk with refugees along their journey. From education to livelihood training, emergency aid, reconciliation, and psychosocial support, we ensure to advocate and protect the most vulnerable. Though it is impossible to gather all stories of people we met, we invite you to enter into some of the stories of people we always remember, and with gratitude to those who graced our paths. Their stories are forever remembered.

2010



Somali refugee resettled in the US

Written by Lian Yong

Legal officer of JRS Cambodia

July 2010, Phnom Penh, Omar came to the JRS office the day he was about to leave for America. He brought with him a piece of paper with 'St Louis' written on it. He sat in my office and we looked at a map of America and found St Louis. He asked me if it was very cold there. This name on a piece of paper would be the final chapter in a story that took Omar from Somalia to Libya, Iraq, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia. Omar comes from a minority group in Somalia. His two brothers were killed and his family disappeared. [READ MORE](#)

Bombs out! Balloons in!

Written by Sr. Denise Coughlan, RSM

Country Director of JRS Cambodia

August 2010, cluster bomb survivors gathered in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to celebrate the Convention to Ban Cluster Munitions coming into force. It was a day of hope as the first disarmament treaty of this century became international law. Wheelchair dancers singing, "If we all join together we can uproot evil and change the world" touched the hearts of many. Some of the dancers were small girls and boys in 1996 when they joined the dance against landmines.. [READ MORE](#)



2011



Mother hopes to give her 'precious gift' a better life

Written by Sharonne Broadhead
Volunteer of JRS Thailand

March 2011 – 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.

[READ MORE](#)

Spending teen years detained

Written by Molly Mullen
Communications Intern of JRS Asia Pacific

January 2010 – Looking at Divea, she seems like an average 18-year-old girl. Wearing a fashionable denim skirt with a t-shirt and long, black hair, she could easily fit in at her high school back in Sri Lanka. But after speaking with Divea for a few minutes, you may forget that she is only 18. Unfortunately, she seems to have forgotten as well. After spending over a year detained in Bangkok's Immigration Detention Centre (IDC), she says she has been forced to grow up fast. [READ MORE](#)



2013



Homeward bound after 2,911 days in detention

Written by Dana MacLean
JRS Asia Pacific Communications Officer

May 2013 — Nearly eight years ago, Mariya, a previously undocumented thirty-three year old Indonesian woman, was arrested and detained in southern Thailand after being found without a valid visa or passport. In March 2005, she was transferred to the Bangkok Immigration Detention Centre, where JRS Thailand works to provide health care, legal aid, and return and release for detainees.

[READ MORE](#)

2015



The Journey of a Rohingya

*Written by Nick Jones
JRS Asia Pacific*

July 2015 – This Rohingya Testimony conducted in Aceh, Indonesia

“I heard that Indonesia will let us stay here one year but after that one year what will happen to us? I have dreams of school, also my friend and our five friends. We wish to study! What will happen to us?”

[READ MORE](#)

2018

“Inter-generational Perspectives: Our land, our home, our future”

*Written by Maria Jose Pinzon
English Subject Coordinator of JRS Thailand*

December 2018 – This workshop, JRS partnered with Juliana Bohorquez, a Colombian artist and activist, and her team to develop and co-facilitate the activities. The group of participants was really representative as it gathered individuals from all walks of life: student leaders, out of school youth and adults who support the JRS Pastoral and Accompaniment project. All in all, 29 participants between the ages of 14 and 53 came together to share, listen, create and empower. [READ MORE](#)



Providing love and learning through education

JRS Myanmar

July 2018 – Roi San, a 24-year old woman, is serving as a volunteer teacher at a Catholic school in the town of Myitkyina in Myanmar’s Kachin State.

“I was interested in teaching young children. I wanted to have an experience as a volunteer teacher educating young children in very remote areas, where the government cannot reach,”

[READ MORE](#)



2019



Laughter is the best medicine
JRS Indonesia

Once a week, Dr. Tine visits a refugee centre in Indonesia. She tells us why she decided to volunteer and what it means to her.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

2020

JRS responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in both refugee and local communities.

JRS Malaysia

July 2020 – JRS joined the Orang Asli Ministry of St. Michael Church in Ipoh, to serve Orang Asli villages during the lockdown of COVID-19. As there is no hospital near their communities, New Thessalonian Apostolate (NTA) together with a doctor and nurses from Fatimah Ipoh Hospital have been bringing medicine, medical equipment, and food rations to the villages once a month since the pandemic.

[READ MORE](#)



Direct support during the COVID-19 crisis

JRS Australia

During the COVID-19 pandemic, JRS Australia remains the only a safety net for many people. Like many others in Australia, people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants in vulnerable situations have lost employment since the COVID-19 pandemic began. People seeking asylum and most migrants on temporary visas are ineligible for ongoing Federal Government support. JRS Australia has been working closely with parishes, schools, dioceses, and civil society partners from within and beyond, to support thousands of people.

[READ MORE](#)



OUR STAFF, OUR STRENGTH

Our staff have committed to assure well-being and protection of forcibly displaced people, and our services are the most evident way to express our solidarity. JRS staff are our greatest asset and the cornerstone of our mission. Our strength comes from the diverse background and experience of our staff. Even though some of them finished their terms, their memories for JRS mission and values remain to inspire us today.

Sr. Evelyn de Alba, FI
 Coordinator
 Accompaniment Program
 JRS Thailand in Mae Hong Son

“

Looking back to the 15 years of working as Coordinator in the Accompaniment Program of JRS-MHS, I feel very blessed, happy and deeply grateful to the Lord, to our Congregation of the Hijas de Jesus (FI) or Daughters of Jesus that sent me here and to JRS that gives us the opportunity to work among our refugee brothers and sisters. [READ MORE](#)



Rachanee Sareechaithaweepong
 Regional Human Resources Officer
 JRS Asia Pacific

“

Another year has passed, another year has come. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my supervisors that I worked with. I learned a lot from them. They supported and taught me not only work but also life lessons. [READ MORE](#)

Yosep Yonal
 Youth Coordinator
 JRS Thailand in Mae Hong Son



10 years serving in JRS, Yonal understands that 'Hospitality' for JRS is not about receiving and accepting but rather about giving (generously). Hospitality is a door for bigger things to come. It could be bigger hope, bigger joy, bigger opportunities, but also bigger challenges and bigger sacrifices. [READ MORE](#)



Sarah Puls
 Good Samaritan Sister and
 Casework Team Leader
 (2015-2018), JRS Australia



As we celebrate 40 years of JRS, I think we are really celebrating 40 years of people coming together, working together to be a force of humanity in a world that needs it more than ever. [READ MORE](#)

Qoni Khoiriyah

Finance officer
Psychosocial Support Project
JRS Indonesia in Bogor



Qoni is working as the Finance Officer for Psychosocial Support Project in Bogor. In this testimony, she walks us through her journey since the first day joining JRS, and helps us understand how inclusive working environment strengthens teamwork and JRS' mission in Indonesia. [READ MORE](#)



KYI THAR

Project Director
Urban Refugee Project



*How does it feel to be accompanied?
A testimony of a JRS staff. I became believing in the deeper impact of "accompaniment" on someone in such a difficult time. What JRS's accompaniment did not only help me through the hardships but also saved my life, healed, and transformed me into a better human being.*
[READ MORE](#)

Zainuddin

Befriend Project Coordinator
JRS Indonesia in Bogor

“

Since the night that Zainuddin was given a soft drink instead of a bottle of beer 11 years ago, he has felt acceptance, respect, and love in the diversity of JRS. Even though he faced questions and disagreements after he decided to work for a Catholic organization, he found that JRS has given him more spiritual experiences, and there is no difference between the values of Islam and Catholicism in serving refugees. [READ MORE](#)



Rosalyn

Country Director
JRS Myanmar

“

"Whenever I visit schools, I always have conversations with students and teachers, listening to their dreams of becoming doctors, engineers, economists, designers, scientists, teachers, musicians, etc. I strongly believe that they can become what they dream for if given opportunities. However, their education is not recognized in Myanmar. Ethnic and refugee returnee children cannot continue further education. This always motivates me to find ways to raise this concern at national level. For me, to serve, is not only to provide service, but to find long-term solutions." [READ MORE](#)

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