

# 4C Pillars of Service

1. Climate Displacement
2. COVID-19 Response
3. Crisis in Myanmar
4. Complementary  
Pathway

A young child with dark hair, wearing a light-colored shirt and shorts, is crouching on the ground and planting a small green sapling into the soil. The child's hands are in the dirt. In the background, there is a shallow stream with rocks and some greenery.

# diakonia

SERVING REFUGEES | SHARING THEIR VOICES



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**#GetToKnowJRS**

Learn more about us at:  
[www.jrsap.org](http://www.jrsap.org)

# Director's Message



We welcome 2022 with gratitude and hope despite many obstacles—the violence in Myanmar has not abated but, in fact, worsened as the country marks the first year of the military junta, the surges of coronavirus infection ravaging the region, and the underachievement of COP 26 in Glasgow. This gratitude and hope is reflected in our current issue of *Diakonia* where we appreciate the good, persevering work around us such as the leadership of indigenous youth in caring for communities and creation, the commitment of Jesuit apostolic communities towards integral conversion, the opening of new pathways for refugees to find durable solutions, the global advocacy to address inequalities and vulnerabilities arising from the pandemic, conflict and climate displacement.

We invite all of you to continue journeying with us in our mission with the forcibly displaced people. May you be blessed in all that you do this year.

Louie Bacomo  
Director, Asia Pacific  
23 May 2022

# Growing Canopies, Strengthening Communities

## 1. Climate Displacement

### 40-4-40 success snapshots



**5 JESUIT PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

Together with the Jesuit Conference in Asia Pacific (JCAP), Committees on Reconciliation with Creation (RWC), and Indigenous Ministry (JCIM) and Youth Ministry/MAGIS, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) would like to specially thank for the success of this project.



**15,000 TREES PLANTED AND 40,000 PLEDGED**

In 2022, we continue our commitment to care for common home. We are planting 40,000 trees and more!



**5 COUNTRIES ACROSS THE REGION**

From Cambodia to Philippines, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar, we are united to grow canopies and strengthen communities.



**40 LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

In cooperation with youth and local partners, 40 communities in 5 countries have joined us in taking care of their home.



**\$31,853 DONATED TO SUPPORT**

You can also help us plant more trees.  
Donate at <https://apr.jrs.net/en/donate>





# Reconciliation with Creation

Project 40-4-40 : Growing Canopies, Strengthening Communities

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**"Project 40-4-40 will pursue its partnerships and implementation especially since we have exceeded our target. We thank all the people and organisations who have helped sustain our collaboration. Our gratitude to the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific and its Social Ministries network, and Jesuit Companions in Indigenous Ministry; the Ecology Program of Jesuit Service Cambodia; the Environmental Science for Social Change of the Philippine Province; and to all our partners in the academe, research centres, parishes, indigenous youth and communities, and individuals who have contributed and believe in the value of this campaign."**

Louie Bacomo

Director of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Asia Pacific



The partnership with indigenous communities has resulted in an engagement of the larger society. The Ateneo de Zamboanga University in southern Philippines supported the Subanen community's participation and involved relevant government agencies in sourcing 2,000 seedlings of local hardwood and cacao for livelihood potential. In Cambodia, the Kbal Khla community engages the local forestry administration officials in site identification, monitoring, and coordinating patrol missions of the vast wildlife sanctuary.

The promotion of cultural integrity and care for creation has raised awareness and inspired others to continue with their community's dream. The Dumagats outside metropolitan Manila is not connected with any Jesuit institution. They have had forest regeneration projects that have failed due to lack of support. Project 40-4-40 is an opportunity to not give up on their goal of planting 10,000 trees in a 20-hectare watershed.

Read full article in the [JCAP Annual Report](#)







# JRS as part of “Caring for Communities and Creation”

Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific (JRSAP) is pleased to announce its participation in “Caring for Communities and Creation”, a Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) flagship project. We “commit ourselves to the urgent call of poverty and reconciliation with creation in Asia Pacific” in collaboration with others especially the youth and sharing our gift of Ignatian spirituality.



Towards making this commitment a concrete reality, the JCAP Major Superiors Assembly approved the “Caring for Communities and Creation” flagship project last Jan 2022. This project calls for each province and region to step up its involvement with ecology and the poor through a three-pronged approach:

- (1) Transitioning to Cleaner Energy
- (2) Youth Leading the Future, and
- (3) Strengthening Local Communities.

To facilitate this, relevant expertise in JCAP will be pooled together for the benefit of each unit, and networks will be developed to share experiences, facilitate mutual learning, and explore concrete collaborations. Where appropriate, each province and region can build on what it is already doing in any of the above three areas. Whilst remaining relevant to its local context, ways to further step up or fine-tune its efforts can be discerned. Additionally, new initiatives can be started in response to emerging needs.

For more information, visit [CCC Introduction](#)



28 February 2022

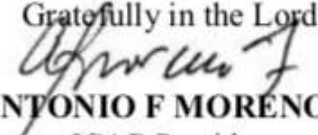
TO THE JESUIT CONFERENCE OF ASIA PACIFIC

Dear friends, Peace.

**Re: The approved JCAP flagship initiative**

I am very pleased to inform you that in the Major Superiors' Assembly (17 – 19 January 2022), the JCAP flagship initiative as specified in the JCAP Plan (2021 – 2025), was approved (see [ANNEX](#) for the details). This initiative, titled “Caring for Communities and Creation,” is one of the major outputs to address the challenges of poverty and reconciliation with creation. This initiative is an attempt to bring together in a more collaborative way the various units of the conference (provinces/regions, networks, ministries and Jesuit communities). At the outset, I must say we are truly grateful that a lot of consoling initiatives have been done in the area of poverty and ecology. This is not meant to be an additional concern on top of your other works. I encourage the good that has been done on the ground, but I hope there can be more collaboration and “walking together” as a conference.

I wish to thank the members of the ad hoc team that worked so hard for this proposal: Frs Adri Suyadi SJ (chair), Gabby Lamug-Nañawa SJ (presenter), Ed Quinnan SJ, and Vids Gomez SJ; Chris Kheng, Kath Rosic, Helen Forde, Louie Bacom, and Ria Limjap. Except for Helen, the rest of the team will continue the task of coordinating, implementing, monitoring and reviewing of the flagship initiative. We want some assurance that the mechanism of implementation is in place, the resources are there and there is an oversight body to look into the whole operation of the flagship initiative. Fr Gabby will be the coordinator of the team. I thank him and the team members for their generous effort to promote the flagship initiative. I thank all of you for supporting this initiative in the spirit of the Ignatian Year.

Gratefully in the Lord,  
  
ANTONIO F MORENO SJ  
JCAP President

# Sustainable and lasting solutions for refugees

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2. Complementary  
Pathway

Refugee are likely to be given the second chance with their lives. I was given the opportunity to study in the University and start my life over.

- Ayesha -

## AYESHA

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**SCHOLAR FROM  
URBAN EDUCATION PROJECT  
AND HER SECRETS TO  
ACADEMIC SUCCESS**







*Ratjai Adjayutpokin (Urban Education Project Director), Ayesha and Fr. Kevin Cullen, S.J. (Country Director, JRS Thailand) at JRS Thailand office.*

## Meet Ayesha, a scholar from Urban Education Project, JRS Thailand

**Ayesha fled from persecution in Pakistan and came to Thailand in 2013. At first, she thought she would sink into a state of depression due to the fact that Refugees are at risk of being arrested in Bangkok, and life is lived in the same small room every day. But her resilient mindset is something else. Ayesha is rising stronger. She decided to take a bold step and chase her academic path. Now she's pursuing a Master's degree in International Relations at Thammasat University. Ayesha is one of the amazing students who achieves a scholarship from JRS Thailand.**

**And here are her secrets.**

### **1. Don't be afraid to try new things.**

"If I tried and failed, it's okay. But if I never try, I'll just be living with regret and it's more painful," said Ayesha about her first step to her dream. She was looking on the internet to find which University offers an English Program. Back in Pakistan, she never studied a full course in English. The First Semester was hard for her as she understood only a few things in class. She had to work harder outside the class. Ayesha invested a lot of time in extracurricular events and joined an international students club. Then she had the chance to connect with people and learn from them. She never gives up and always finds a way to learn new things.

### **2. Surround yourself with good people.**

She decided to leave the community where she first arrived because the neighborhood was not the right energy for her. "When you feel you don't belong there, you leave." Ayesha always knows what she wants and she goes for it. She realized that she could not be in this group of people who spoke negative things and lived in fear all the time. That decision sent her on her way to find the University and to live a different life. "The people in your circle matter a lot." She always meets new people and befriends other students in the University.

### **3. Positivity is the key.**

As a refugee woman, life is challenging enough for Ayesha. She found out that the more she thinks negatively about her life, the more it affects her personality. "If you're just living in your past and put your past into your present and think that you're the victim of the world and do nothing about that, you had just proved to yourself that way." She started to treat herself in the way she wanted others to treat her. She has self-respect, confidence, and dignity. Luck wasn't the key to getting her into the University, but rather the positivity in finding hope and believing in every difficulty she confronted.





#### 4. Find your passion.

When you feel trapped in one place, it's hard to find passion. Ayesha suggested that first, you should get yourself out of your comfort zone. And when you have a passion to do something, there is nothing that can stop you from doing that. She received admission to the University even when her English skills were limited. But with the passion inside her, she knew she needed to learn English very fast and at any cost. There were times when she was tired and fatigued, but the only passion got her over this to achieve what she wanted. "You have to do and never give up," said Ayesha.

She couldn't believe her eyes when she saw the announcement of a scholarship program for higher education from JRS Thailand. No one ever talks about support in higher education for asylum seekers and refugees. JRS has played an important role in Ayesha's Master's degree program.

**As a minority and as a woman, her opportunities in education were limited. In general, her culture does not support women to go to University or receive Higher Education. The belief that money is earned from only men is fundamentally strong in the culture. Women have to sit and wait at home for their livelihoods. Sometimes, they suffer from domestic violence and are not able to leave it as they will have no financial support. With education, they grow in independence and can make good decisions for their own life. With education, people can express themselves, refine and define themselves in a better way in the world. Ayesha hopes that all refugee women are able to pursue their academic life with maximum opportunities.**



# Interview: Cardinal Bo on the chances for peace

By Kevin Clarke, Senior Editor/Chief Correspondent

Originally published on America Magazine, February 01, 2022

**he world was shocked on Feb. 1, 2021, when a military junta in Myanmar, claiming election irregularities, arrested Nobel Peace Prize laureate and national leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The coup overturned the nation's fledgling democracy, leading to the arrest or exile of many leaders of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy. The N.L.D. had won a landslide victory in November 2020, soundly defeating the military-sponsored Union Solidarity and Development Party.**

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the commander of Myanmar's military, known as the Tatmadaw, led the junta that seized power that morning. Unlike previous reversals of democratic expression in Myanmar, this time the military has been challenged from the beginning by activists and average people, unwilling to surrender 10 years of economic and political gains since the generals last ruled the nation. Now many protesters are joining long-standing resistance movements against the Tatmadaw, and violence has been on the rise.

More than 1,500 people have been killed by security forces since the coup, and almost 9,000 have been detained. More than 405,00 have been internally displaced as the military razes villages to root out resistance and 32,000 have become refugees. An unknown number of activists, journalists and everyday people have been tortured and disappeared. The military has been accused of human rights abuses in its campaign to solidify its rule.

Catholics represent a tiny minority of the population in this largely Buddhist nation. Since the conflict expanded out of large cities and into semi-autonomous, ethnic-minority regions, Catholic churches, where many villagers sought sanctuary, and humanitarian aid workers have been targeted by security forces.

In a statement released on Feb. 1, Jesuit Refugee Service urged that the people of Myanmar not be forgotten, calling on the international community to "join forces with those seeking a resolution to the crisis to ensure that families are brought back together, children are able to go back to school, adults are able to work again and all are able to reconcile with God, self and others."

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon has repeatedly called for the release of political prisoners, dialogue and the end of all violence. He agreed to an interview, conducted this week by email, to assess the political conditions in Myanmar and chances for peace in the future one year after the coup.

**What is your assessment of the political situation at this time? Is it stabilizing—that is, people becoming resigned to military rule—or is it on the verge of becoming much worse as more people join the resistance?** There is a stalemate. Covid and the conflict broke our communities. I do hope and pray that the situation will be under control soon, but rebuilding trust and rebuilding our institutions will be a long, arduous task. Unfortunately, the conflict is becoming more brutal; the atrocities are more shocking each day.





*Photo: Agenzia Notizie Salesiana*

Our people are not resigned. They seek peace with dignity and a country that will be reborn through reconciliation. People always have a choice, even when they feel trapped. But violence is not the only way to confront evil, nor is it an effective way. It tends to only breed more violence. There is always the path of dialogue, peace and reconciliation. I believe in dialogue. I urge all to reject armed response.

**What is your message for Myanmar's military leaders?**

I have issued many statements since my first response on Feb 3, 2021. In that statement, I deplored the military intervention. I forecast the possibility of bloodshed. I pleaded with the army that the conflict it initiated is not against an external enemy. The Tatmadaw was inflicting harm on the sons and daughters of this nation. I sought the release of all political prisoners. I feared for the youth. Those are my messages today as well.

As a Salesian I have special concern for youth. I appealed to the youth directly many times, saying that I understand their pain, though I may not agree with their solutions. I am deeply concerned that this nation may lose its youth either to total frustration or hatred or desire for revenge. It is our moral duty to protect them. I continue to appeal to the military to understand the youth, their sense of deprivation, their deep disappointments. Some have sought armed response.

My message is the same to all combatants. Stop the fighting, cease the violence. Allow humanitarian assistance to the displaced people. Let the people find safety. In that the army can play a major role.

**Are Myanmar's minority Catholics particularly at risk? Are churches still under attack?**

The churches have suffered greatly because many of the areas of ethnic minorities where much of the fighting is now has high numbers of Christian people. Churches have been hit by artillery and airstrikes. People who take refuge in church properties have not been safe.

Yes, risk is greater in many areas where Christian populations are concentrated. But we need to be cautious. All kinds of people have suffered in this unfortunate, tear-filled saga. Everybody is affected. See the reports of the United Nations. Millions are hungry. We seek peace for all people in all areas. We as the Myanmar people need to settle this issue, not allowing any group to claim victimhood.

**It seems as if many around the world are coming to accept authoritarian rule and are not as eager to defend democracy as a political idea/system worth preserving. Are you worried that the world has moved on from the crisis in Myanmar and is no longer advocating for a peaceful resolution?**

The United States is a worthy case study. Democracy has taken a beating in that country. Even a year after the election, that great citadel of democracy is in a turmoil. The events of Jan. 6 might have provided an inspiration here to contest a legitimately won election. What happens in many countries where authoritarianism is asserting itself is a reflection of the visceral wound inflicted on democracy in many parts of the world.



Of course, the world is distracted by the terrible events in Afghanistan, Ukraine and Ethiopia. And it is true that many companies big and small are distancing themselves from the shady enterprises in Myanmar and withdrawing from the collapsing economy, but I hope that the world can show greater attention to solving the issues of Myanmar. But not everyone is neglecting Myanmar. We thank you and your readers for considering us in our time of need.

**Your Christmas meeting with General Min Aung Hlaing proved controversial. Do you regret it now? What is your relationship now with the general and other government leaders?**

The photos released to the media were unfortunate. That was out of our control, once I had agreed to the meeting. But I was very candid in my intention. I do not regret it in any way. We need to engage the major stakeholders in this country.

From day one of the political shift, I sought to meet both the democracy leader and the army. The invitation was always there.

It came during Christmas time. I had a clear plan to engage the army on major issues. The senior general knew that he could speak to me and I hoped he would listen. We had a long private conversation on that occasion in which he promised many things. We wait now to see the outcome.

That meeting has not deterred me from issuing a strong condemnation of the obscene actions on Christmas Day. Those of us living in this country and who have experienced its history know that all actors in this challenging country need to be engaged.

Yes, it was not to the liking of some. The photos conveyed a quite different message. I continue my efforts and remain hopeful of good results in the long run, at a time when a resolution can be found through dialogue. I am convinced I have the interests of the Myanmar people in my heart.

Pope Francis gave a great mission for the church to be the peacemaker in this country. My Christmas meeting was intended to fulfill that mandate.

**The Catholic Church is a minority in Myanmar. Does it have to move cautiously at this dangerous time? What positive role can it play?**

Everyone is acting cautiously now because the military is clearly deadly serious. But everyone has a role to play in seeking peace, in praying for peace. Peace is the only way, and the minority church needs to work together with all other religious brothers and sisters in bringing peace.

**How can the international community help? Can the global church do more? Can the United States play a more effective role?**

We believe that the Myanmar people have to resolve this matter. At the same time, we appreciate that the international community, including China and Japan as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, has a role to play. The United States is encouraging ASEAN to exercise a clear role.

**Are you in communication with Aung San Suu Kyi and other imprisoned N.L.D. leaders? What is their condition? Do you believe they—and other people recently imprisoned—should be released?**

No one is allowed to make contact with Aung San Suu Kyi. My intention was to greet her during Christmas. In the past, I used to invite the Tatmadaw's senior general and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi every Christmas. How I wished I could have done that this year!

About prisoners: Of course, anyone unjustly imprisoned should be released immediately. So many of these people were running the government a year ago. They are our people and they need to be released and involved in the reconciliation process. That is the only way.

I am sure the army will understand this sooner or later.



# Community Learning Support Program (CLSP)

**An initiative to create a learning space for IDPs, refugee returnees and host students living amid COVID-19 pandemic and political crisis in Myanmar.**

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**"The Inspired Encouragement and Initiative"**  
**By Stella, JRS-Education Officer/ Trainer**



*IDP students are studying at Kayah State, Myanmar.*

**My name is Daw Lu Daw Phaw and I used to be the head teacher of Palaele primary school. I joined CDM (Civil Disobedience Movement) after the coup in February 2021. I am personally teaching at and supporting the community-based learning activities established by the villagers in Palaele village with the support of JRS. In 2020-2021 academic year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, school were closed nationwide. As a result, our children lost the chance to continue their learning. A few parents think that it was good that the school was closed as their children could help them in their farm, but most of the parents felt sad as they found that their children were doing nothing for their improvement and their children are getting older without promoting to the next level of education.**

In 2021-2022 academic year, with the encouragement of Ester Htay, one of mobile education assistants who is also from Palaele village, we started the community-based classes in our village since July 2021 until now. We run the class with volunteer teachers and CDM teachers from our Palaele village and as I was pregnant during that time, Ester Htay and village pastor are the ones who led and organized the whole village to implement the classes considering the education of our children.





*IDP students are studying in classroom at Kayah State, Myanmar.*

In 2020 when schools were also closed due to COVID-19, children in our village were wasting their time and their participation in church activities was less. Besides, they did not give time to study to improve their literacy and numeracy skill. However, after we opened the Community Learning Center in July 2021, the students became more active in participating in Church activities, studying for their personal and professional improvement, physically staying clean and healthy. According to the feedback of the parents, the children become more polite, and they listen to their parents more after the school reopened.

As armed conflicts are ongoing in Kayah State, people from Palaele village were also displaced to the jungle for two times in July and August and we could not open the classes regularly in the first three months. Since children have been away from school for more than a year, volunteer teachers had to try harder to get attention in the class. Now the students are getting more focused, adjusted and happy to come to the learning center. During the class, according to the volunteer teachers, the students always talk about the armed conflicts that happened near the village in the class as they heard the sound of gun shots, bombs and they themselves have to run to the jungle during that time. Because of this case, the teachers were worrying about the feeling and trauma of the children. When the classes are going on regularly, the students are talking less about these conflicts as they have to give more attention to the lesson in the classes and it was a great relief for the teachers as the learning center is a safe space for them.

At the beginning, some students do not come to the classes regularly, so, Ester Htay organized parents' meeting in the village, sharing about psychosocial support and positive parenting to the parents and explaining and encouraging the parents the importance of their participation in their children's education. During the meeting, Ester Htay also introduced JRS and JRS's supports for EiE activity in their village. After the meeting, parents were getting more motivated and they encouraged their children to study hard. As a result, students join the classes more regularly and participate actively in every school activity

We could also extend until grade 8 level from only primary level at the beginning. There are now about 70 students. This community-based learning activity is a great motive for us and it also inspires our neighboring villages to open their community learning centers too. As Ester Htay is actively participating in and also a member of education working groups in Taw Khu village tract, she is a great supporter in our village. During this hardest time in the pandemic and political crises, we are not forgotten, and we thank JRS very much for every support to our village and this support encourages us to continue implementing education activities.



# Vatican COVID-19 Commission

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## 4. COVID-19 Response



**The COVID-19 pandemic induced repercussions on lives and livelihood. It is the crisis that marks our time, a crisis from which - as Pope Francis has repeatedly said - we can either emerge better or worse. It has exposed the inequalities and injustices that threaten the well-being, security and lives of all, and exacerbated a series of interconnected crises - economic, ecological, political and social - that disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable.**

To respond to the crises of humanity, the Dicastery established a Vatican COVID-19 Commission to address the challenges created by the pandemic afflicting the planet. Its action will focus on two areas to care for lives and livelihoods, and strengthen social and ecological safety nets through public health and economic reforms for marginalized populations. It prepares the future of the world in three areas:

1. food, since hunger will increase for hundreds of millions of people.
2. Integral ecology, to come up with new economic models that are more respectful of human health and the environment.
3. Charity for the marginalized communities through greater inclusiveness and solidarity.

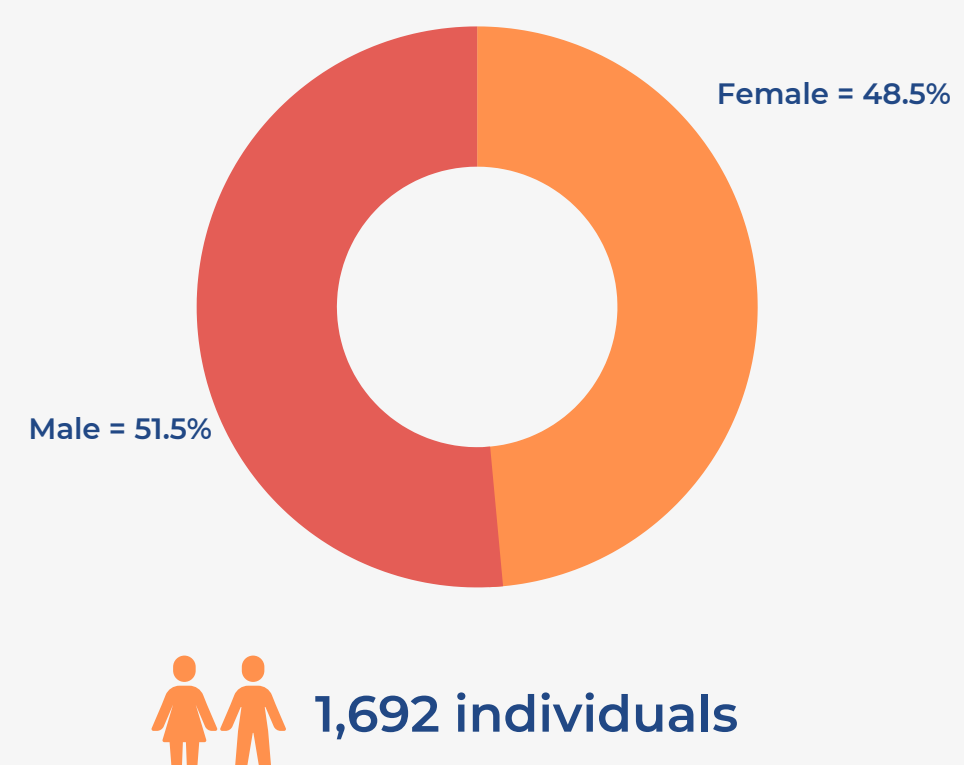
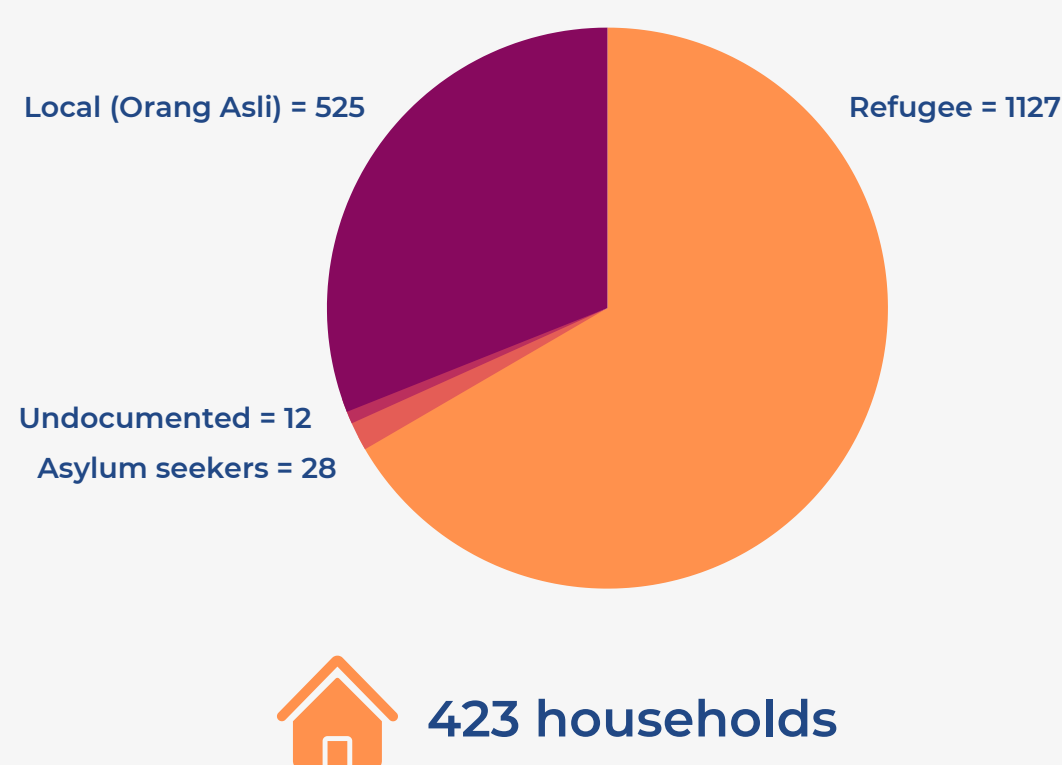
Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Asia Pacific, in partnership with local organizations and churches, incorporate the Vatican COVID-19 Commission's three areas of focus to accompany, serve, and advocate the rights of refugees and others who are forcibly displaced. We run pastoral care and psychosocial support programmes in detention centres and refugee camps, and provide humanitarian relief in emergency displacement situations. Education and livelihoods programmes provide skill development and opportunities for integration into host communities. JRS also sees the importance of promoting integral ecology and climate displacement to ensure that our mission complement Integral Human Development of the people we served, that they may heal, learn and determine their own future.



# Assistance to mitigate COVID-19 impact in Malaysia

The project in Malaysia was able to provide protection from hunger, homelessness, and loss of income to most vulnerable families through the cash support provided for food, shelter, and income-generating activities (IGA). The main people served during the period was the refugee population. More than a quarter of the assistance was distributed to households from the local indigenous and minority population in Malaysia as the pandemic impacted all communities and further marginalized remote communities which are unable to access government assistance.

Total population served as of September 2021



The effect of COVID-19 on the livelihood of respondents. When COVID-19 hit their communities, 75.1% of those who had work or business (305 of 406), lost their jobs/sources of income. Most of respondents shared that they sat in their houses waiting for a phonecall for a job. They found it difficult to find a new job as most of employers prefer to employ Malaysians.

For the other 24.9% or those who were able source income (101 of 406), no one mentioned that their earnings are enough to sustain their household expenses after COVID-19. This is especially true for rent and food expenses. Based on interviews, from working 20-25 days a month before the pandemic, refugees now have to work only 5 to 10 days per month with minimum daily wage of 40-70 MYR (10-17.50 USD). In addition, it is interesting to note that among types of earners, the monthly earners were the hardest hit with 94.6% reported losing their jobs compared to 61.7% of daily earners.

Without their usual source of income, refugees relied on charity or NGOs in their neighbourhood to get food such as rice, sugar, egg, etc. A community partner had distributed assistance three (3) times between March to June 2020 to the most vulnerable students and their families. Very few organizations offer cash assistance for house rent or electricity bill.



# The story of Soyod

## A testimony of refugee in Malaysia.

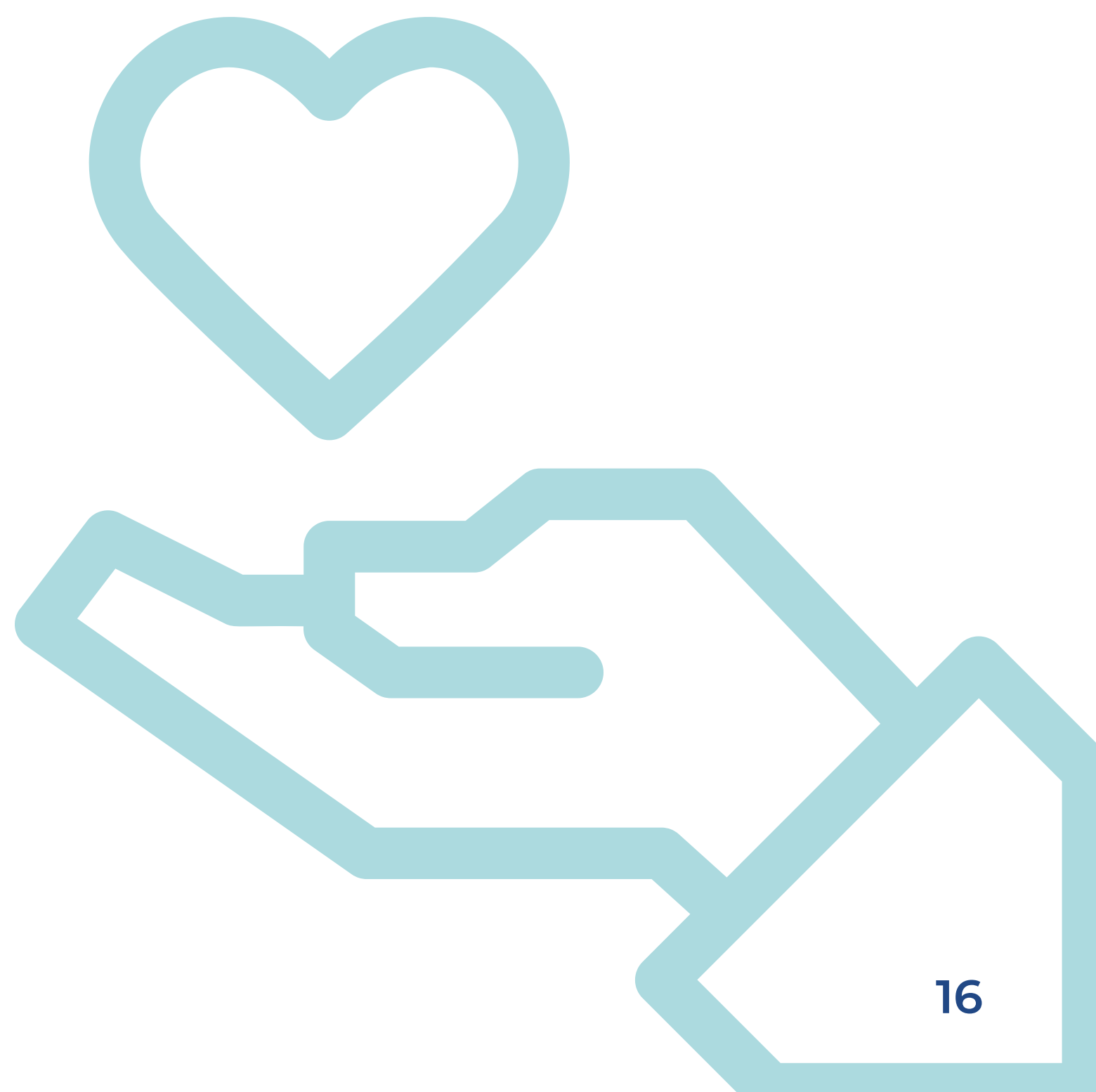
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Soyod is a 55-year-old father who lives among the refugee community in Alor Setar, Kedah. His small family consists of 2 children and a wife. Soyod does not have any special skills. He can speak Malay but he cannot read. He has been working numerous jobs to feed his family from construction to currently part of a local cleaning company as a road sweeper. Soyod said because he did not have other skills, so he had to work all these jobs to support his family.

He came to Malaysia in the 1990s when he was in his early 30s with a payment of 500 MYR (125 USD) for a one-way journey into the borders. He fled from Rakhine state, Myanmar, and had spent 10 days in the crowded boat with other people. He remembered being forced to change to a smaller boat after certain days in the sea by smugglers. With other people, this small boat left to drift to the shores. Upon reaching the shorelines on the Malaysia border, Soyod was arrested by the local law enforcers and was detained for a few months.

He was forced to leave his village in Rakhine, Myanmar, because his life was at stake. The military attacked his village and burnt Soyod's house. His family was killed in his house, and his only child was decapitated in front of him. He was the only survivor and he fled to Malaysia for safety and started a new family there.

When Malaysia was hit by the pandemic, Soyod lost his job. He was able to survive with the help of his friends. He stated that he has not received any form of aid since the first day he arrived. He heard about Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and New Thessalonian Apostolate (NTA)'s aid from his community. After a long wait for an assessment interview, he finally received the aid. "I've never received any aid before, this is the first time an organization offered me aid," Soyod said. This assistance meant so much to him as He could manage to cover some of his necessities with the given amount. He believes that the aid is a big help in this difficult time.







## A PLACE TO CALL HOME

### A report on the experiences of homelessness and housing exclusion among people seeking asylum in Greater Sydney

**Years after arriving in Australia, people seeking asylum face chronic homelessness and housing exclusion in the community, a new report by Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia and Western Sydney University's Translational Health Research Institute (THRI) has found.**

The report, entitled *A Place to Call Home: A Report on the Experiences of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion among People Seeking Asylum in Greater Sydney*, presents findings from detailed interviews with fourteen women and men seeking asylum, exploring their experiences housing and homelessness, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Detailing participants' housing trajectories, living arrangements and conditions, and challenges with finding and maintaining safe, secure, and adequate housing, *A Place to Call Home* shows how restrictions on economic and social rights associated with visa status, barriers to employment in competitive labour markets, and Sydney's high rental prices generate conditions under which homelessness and housing exclusion become a feature of the lives of people seeking asylum.

Dr. Elizabeth Conroy, Senior Research Fellow at Western Sydney University and report co-author said, "many participants experienced ongoing housing exclusion, and were compelled to make decisions to stay in inadequate, insecure or unsafe housing arrangements to avoid homelessness."

"The resourcefulness of participants was prominent in the data but so was the toll of housing exclusion on people's dignity and agency, and their wellbeing overall."

Nishadh Rego, Policy, Advocacy, and Communications Manager, JRS Australia said, "the findings of this report reveal just how challenging it is for people seeking asylum to maintain a roof over their heads on short-term bridging visas, which may or may not include work rights, and without any form of income support. Delays in determination, processing, and review of protection claims means that people live on the cusp of homelessness for years,"

"The Australian Government has a responsibility to ensure that people seeking asylum live safe and dignified lives free from homelessness and poverty whilst their claims for protection are being processed."



## **'A PLACE TO CALL HOME'**

**makes recommendations of Federal, State, and local council Governments, arguing that each must play a key role in driving systemic improvements in the housing and financial circumstances of people seeking asylum in the community.**

The report affirms findings from a recent survey of more than a hundred respondents seeking asylum, which found that 55% of respondents had experienced some form of homelessness since arriving in Australia.

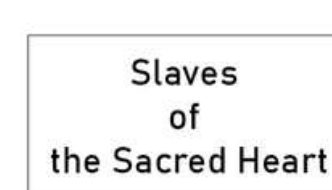
A Place to Call Home will be launched online on Friday 10 December at 11 AM, and involves a panel discussion with Maryam, a refugee leader on a temporary visa, Dr. Eve Lester, an Australian Research Council DECRA Fellow and JRS Australia Board Member, Mr. Jack De Groot, CEO of the St Vincent De Paul Society NSW, and Dr. Elizabeth Conroy, Senior Research Fellow at Western Sydney University, and co-author of the report.

**Read the full report, [A Place to Call Home: A Report on the Experiences of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion among People Seeking Asylum in Greater Sydney.](#)**



# Acknowledgement

JRS is grateful for the solidarity and financial support from generous partners and all private donors who want to remain anonymous. Our gratitude also to brave community partners who implemented the emergency response with us.





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