



REFUGE

Not seeing any shore or sandbars

I ran away to somewhere I could escape.

I had no place to take refuge.

Who would be the Lord?

Who would be the savior?

Running amid the horrific thunder.

Killing people

like the people's lives are as banana leaves.

God, please have a look at those evil demons.

I grabbed my life and fled my home.

and ran toward the savior.

I sat and gazed and asked.

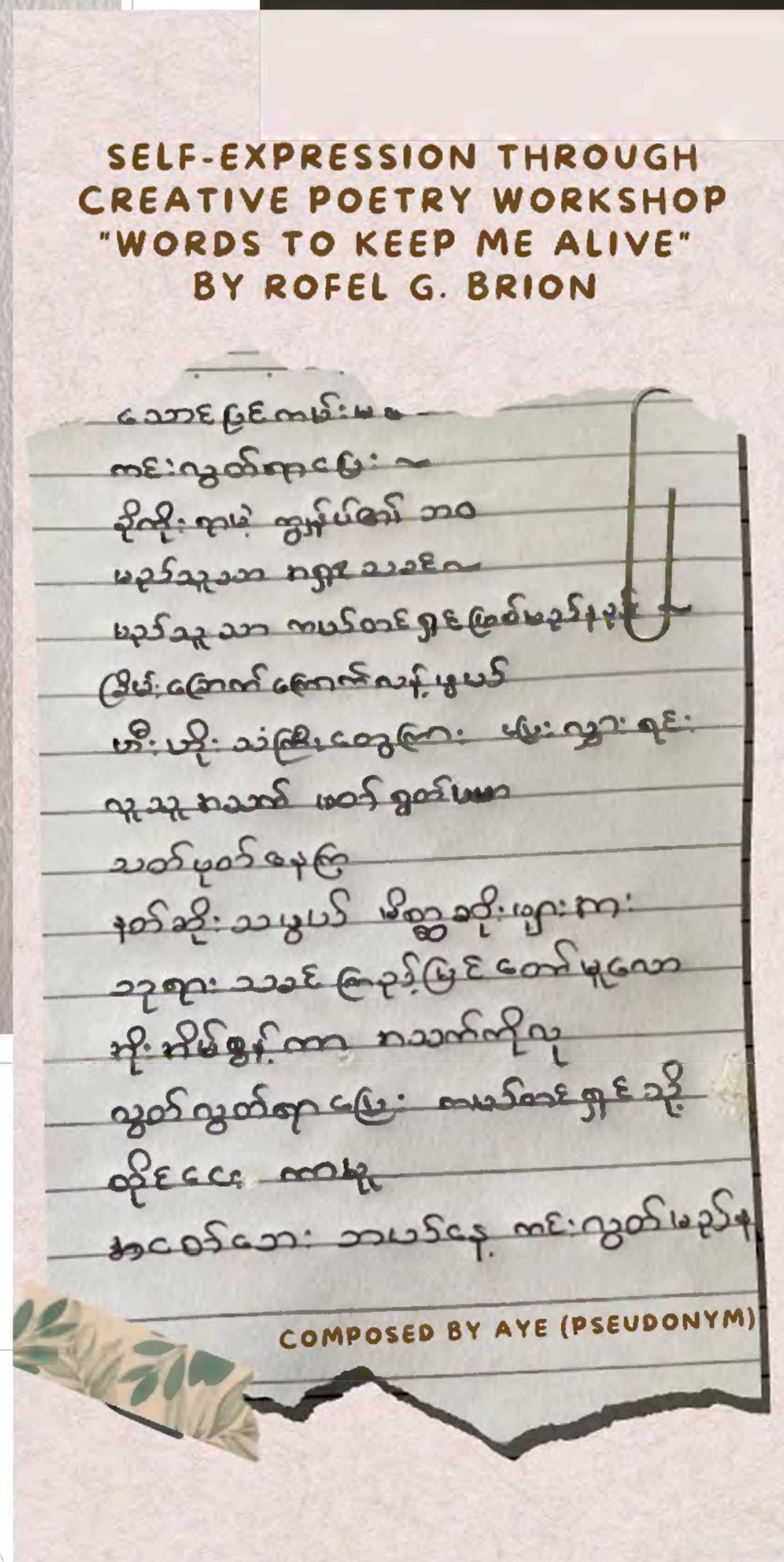
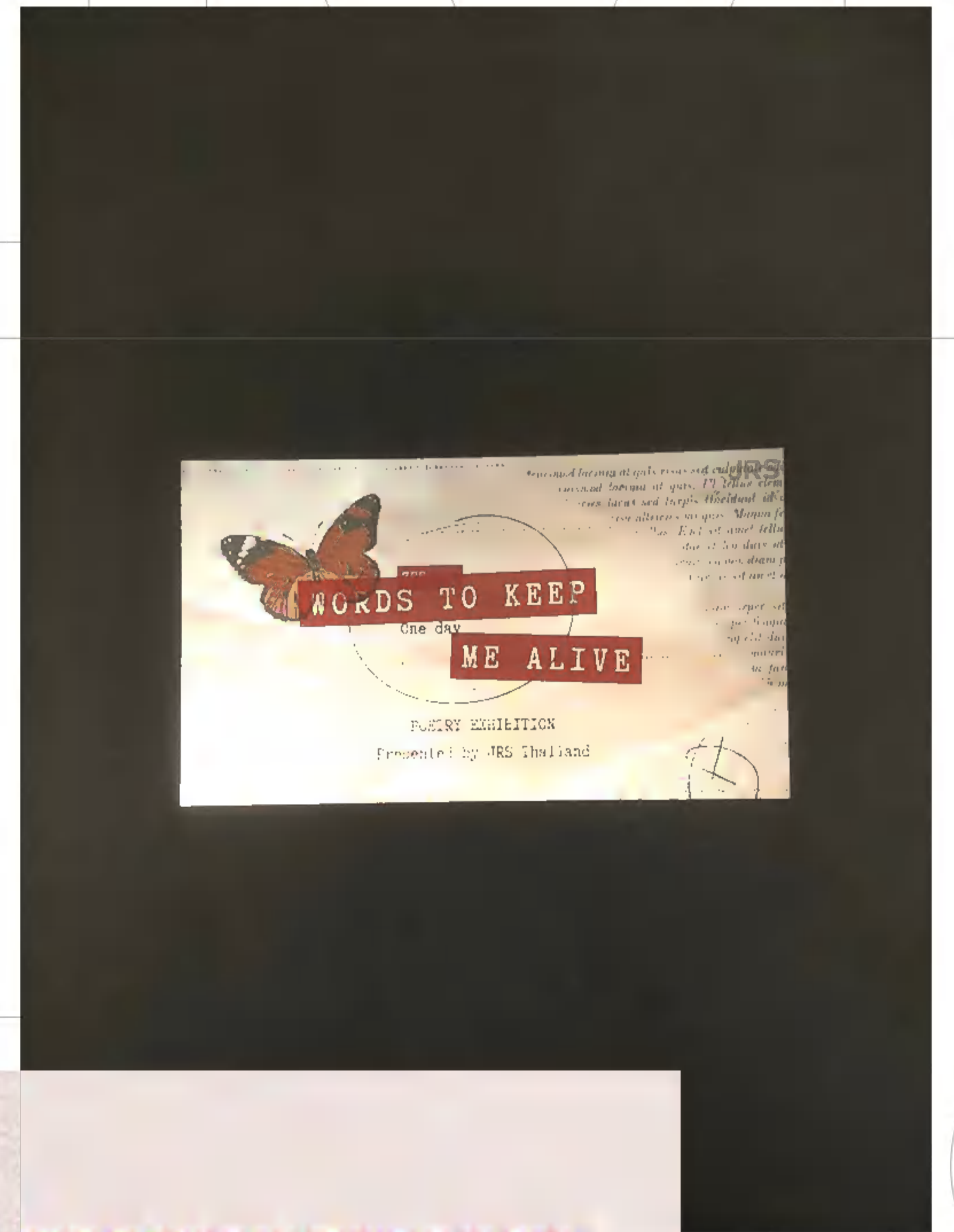
When would I escape from famine?



WORDS TO KEEP ME ALIVE



**Composed by refugees
in a writing workshop
conducted by JRS Thailand
on Refugee Poetry Exhibition.**



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

REFUGEE REFUGE

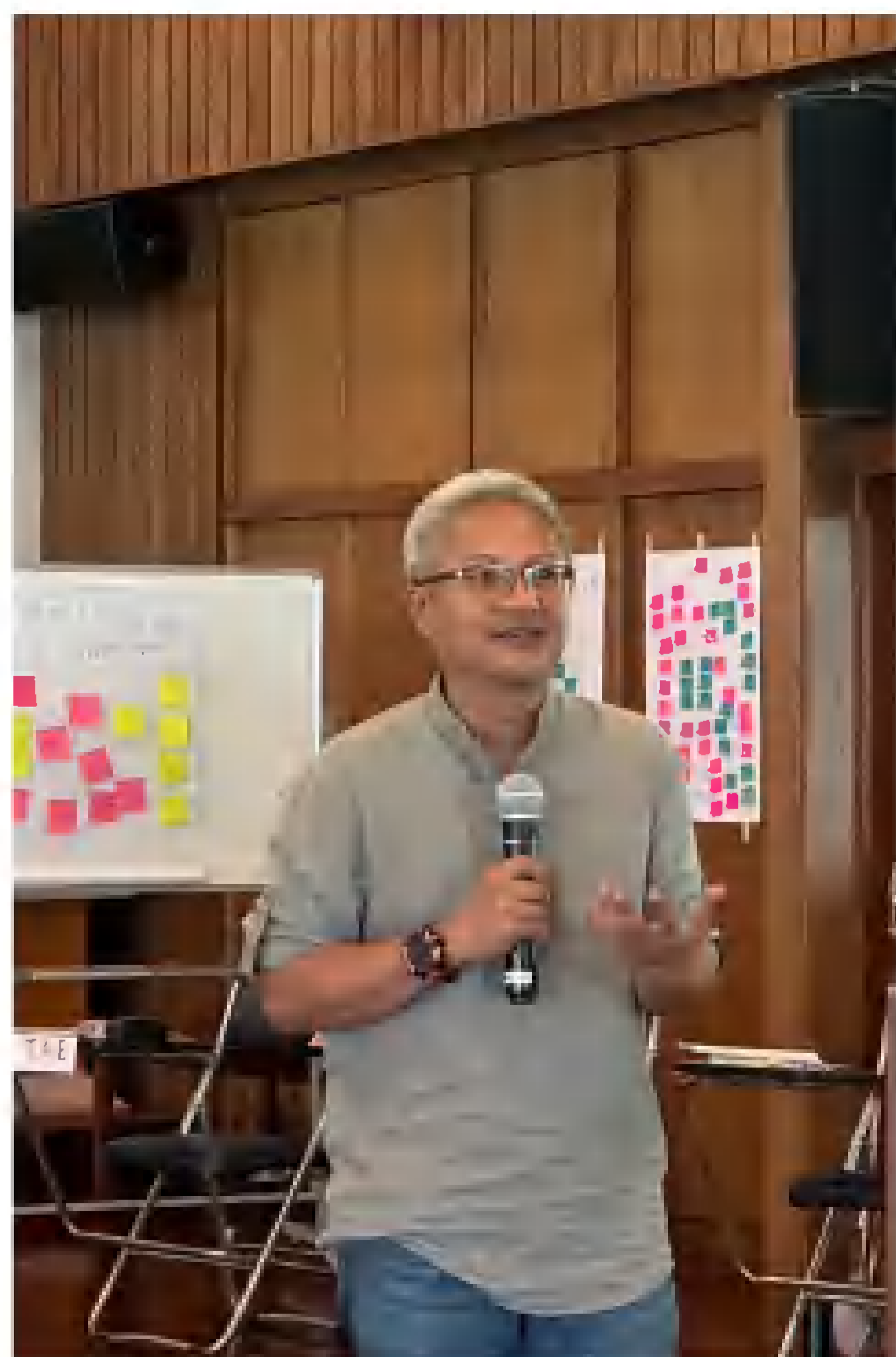
Once in a JRS regional meeting, we were asked what in our language is a refugee?

From the many nationalities participating, diverse words came out. But one theme that pervades various definition is someone seeking refuge, finding safety and protection from danger or distress.

In this issue, we hear stories that uncover what is the refuge that refugees seek. In Thailand and Australia, refuge comes in the form of poetry and arts as refugees become peace artisans, poets of the written and spoken word. Safety can be found in family friendship groups and spiritual communion with God in IDP and refugee camps for refugees from Myanmar or in Sisterhood Communities established by refugee communities in Indonesia.

With refugees showing us the way, we can do more to build a better society. Countries can do more to enable inclusive policies that overcome their divisive borders.

Each year, the World Refugee Day reminds us of the plight of all forcibly displaced persons and gives us an opportunity as individuals and nations to recreate communities where everyone can find refuge.



Climate change and extreme weather events threaten the lives and homes of about 216 million people globally.

Climate change and extreme weather events threaten the lives and homes of about 216 million people globally. Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific (JRSAP) and project consortium members Philippine-based Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC) and Indonesia-based Percik - The Institute for Social Research, Democracy, and Social Justice, with the support of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Indonesia convened a three-day workshop on 10-12th January 2023 to discuss ideas for a climate research and advocacy project framework, finalise the purpose of scoping and target sites, plot standard schedules, and secure staff hiring.



To ensure strategic and inclusive project-design, we visited the tiny island barangays (villages) Northwest of Bohol, particularly Nocnocan Island in the municipality of Talibon and Nasingin Island in the municipality of Getafe. We learn more about the impact of the climate crisis and how communities respond.



***We seek to build the resilience
of coastal and island communities
vulnerable to climate-induced displacement
and help them make informed choices
about their future.***



This is not the first time...

Thailand continues to host some 90,337 refugees (as of June 2023, under reverification) from Myanmar in the nine RTG-run temporary shelters on the Thai/Myanmar border, in addition to approximately 5,000 urban refugees and asylum-seekers from over 40 countries, and some 480,000 persons registered by the RTG as stateless.

This is not the first time. Since the violent coup in Myanmar, refugees have crossed borders to seek safety only to be pushed back by Thailand.



FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

Miss May
(pseudonym)

Voices that matter-refugee life story.

You are listening to the life story of May.

The story is about a history of suffering and surviving with hope.

Miss May (pseudonym) is a 20-year-old woman who looks after one child and three younger brothers. It's been over five years since she first moved to the village:

Years ago, she fled persecution in Myanmar. She lived apart from her family because her family fled to another part of Myanmar while she went to the Ban Mae Surin refugee camp. She had no idea of how to resume her life after arriving at the camp. She attempted to complete every task. She was capable of living in the village at first.

She had to collect the items from the nearby forest and weave the garments herself. After she got married to her husband and had a son, living as refugees with infants was difficult for them.

“

**I am thrilled to join the project.
I used to have a lot of difficulties
because I had to raise my child
with limited resources.**

✓ **I can now raise him well.**

**I have enough income to buy the things
that I need. I have paid the debt.**

I do not need to borrow the money anymore.

”

Miss May and her husband must work tirelessly to keep their child safe and healthy. Raising the baby in this living condition is extremely difficult. This small family did everything to find work and earn money in the camp.

Miss May's husband goes out every day to look for work or gather food for the family. He occasionally ventures into the forest searching for goods to sell or eat.

Miss May was left alone in the house with her son. She looked after their son, did housework, and could not attend school.

Miss May learned about the "Cooperative-Young Entrepreneurship" of Jesuit Refugee-Service Thailand, a project that involved refugee youth in creating a small business.

Additionally, she was happy to join the group because it allowed her to meet new people her age and be herself again.



DREAM AND HOPE

Voices that matter - refugee life story

You are listening to the voice of Ann.

A mother who has heart filled with bravery.

Miss Ann
(pseudonym)

Ann (pseudonym) was born in Burma. She's 28, married, and a mother of three. She was a teacher at Ban Mai Nai Soi Primary School from 2013 to 2015. She is now engaged on the Family and-Friendship Group Steering Committee.

Since 2018, she has been an integral part of the Family Friendship Group Steering-Committee. She has attended meetings and training, disseminated information, invited people to attend, set up the meeting space, collected registration documents, and helped pass out handouts and refreshments.

Ann has spent the past fifteen years in the camp. She came from Kayah State. At 12, she had only completed standard 2 of school before she went to the camp. She did not know why they left the town. She followed her parents' lead.

They were escorted to the camp by Karenni soldiers. They entered the camp in May 2007 and were instructed to report to the New Arrivals Area. They stayed there for an entire year before moving into their place. They received a bed, a blanket, a mosquito net, and clothing.



Ann was responsible for her younger brothers and sisters because her mother had to work. She faced many challenges because she had to take care of her younger siblings.

The stepfather was always inebriated. Ann had to drop out of school when she was in standard 8 because no one looked after her younger siblings.

Ann said that she always cries when she thinks about the past. She knew JRS from her third-grade study. JRS now supports her family through pig farming and agriculture. Raising pigs was a way for her to supplement her income. Her dream and hope are to be resettled so she can help her younger brothers and sisters.



MAY

The border communities along the Salween River, which serves as the natural boundary of Thailand and Myanmar, have a long-shared culture, history, economic trading, and social relations.

In the pervasive and invasive violence engulfing southeastern states and the whole country of Myanmar, many have crossed the border to get access to assistance and seek opportunities to live in Thailand.

Jesuit Refugee Service Thailand has been working on the project “Education without Border.”



For the rights of undocumented and stateless children

For safety and protection of the child



For life skills and livelihoods



On the last day of May this year, JRS completed the project exit and handover to partners. We appreciate all of the support to provide education and safety to children across borders.

We continue to work with partners to serve the people in need in future initiatives.



In May 2023, JRS Thailand project directors met in Mae Sa Riang to reflect and share about project progress and plans. We reviewed, revised, and refocused our work to make an effective plan in responding to the Myanmar crisis.

With that, we developed the new country strategic plan.

Working in emergency

On 12th July 2023, the Junta military attacked the Daw Naw Ku (DNK) IDP site in Myanmar. DNK is the biggest of the 5 IDP camps along Kayah State border with Mae Hong Son Province.

JRS is assisting about 5,000 people, 1,500 students, and teachers in our education program.

More intense prayer, raising awareness, and emergency support for Myanmar are needed. We express our gratitude to all JRS staff for their dedicated work in serving the people who are suffering.



Do not turn a blind eyes

As of July 2023, the estimated number of IDPs in Myanmar increased to more than 1,500,000. With the ongoing catastrophe, more and more people flee out of the country. They leave everything behind.

“We fled to a nearby monastery with no light. At midnight we were so scared of the big rocket shelling into the village if we lit the fire. We had to stay in the dark for the whole night.”

“My family and I spent eight months in the camp crying every night. I felt very sad when I heard that the junta burned down houses, including mine, in our village. At that time, no more peace and forgiveness could come from my mind.”



JUNE

Each year on 20th June, the world honors people who have been forced to flee during World Refugee Day.

JRS Singapore



Presentation about the refugee situation and the work of JRS



all ready to share about our programmes

JRS Australia

On 16th June, JRS organized an event called Finding Freedom: Raising Our-Voices, featured participants in our Refugee Leadership program who gave speeches and spoken word performances about their lived-experience of forced displacement.

Volunteers prepared delicious Persian food for participants, among whom were JRS volunteers, supporters, and staff, as well as elected government representatives.

Cross-border: JRS Team working for refugees ▶



JRS Thailand

JRS Thailand organized the World Refugee Day event "Peace Artisans", which took place on 23rd June. The event aimed to provide a safe space for refugees to showcase their talents and abilities while participating in fun activities.

Dancing performance by Pakistani and Somali artists. Fashion show by Hope-international. Also, food sharing, henna, hair cutting, nail art, and Thai massage.

All of these exhibited the extraordinary beauty and talent of the refugees.



The queue for Henna painting



Art work from refugee

JRS Indonesia



Ms. Melani Wulandari, the representative from JRS Indonesia, conducted a Public Discussion forum along with SUAKA, an association in Indonesia for the protection of refugee rights in the Commemoration of World Refugee Day 2023. The event highlighted the urgency of holding cross-organisational dialogue and events, such as the RISE Discussion Series as international communities gear up for the December 2023 Global Refugee Forum.

Ms. Nimo Ahmed is the Co-founder and Director of Sisterhood Community (previously she was a refugee in Indonesia, now resettled in New Zealand). Sisterhood is designed as a safe space for refugee women in Indonesia.

“We don’t have homes here but Sisterhood Community presents to empower hope for a better future and livelihood”



JRS AP

I'm Morteza, a refugee from Afghanistan currently living in Indonesia.

I was born in 2000 in a land of homelessness that was not my homeland. I grew up there for almost a decade. Life there was not beautiful. Discrimination and differences between the locals and Afghan people who lived there existed. After living there for a while, we returned to our homeland. indeed, stepping into our land is a matter of pride. Even though I was a child, I felt bright happiness within myself seeing my country and its people. My country was as beautiful as Joseph's and as sad as Jacob's after spending a few years in Afghanistan. In 2019, due to security issues, danger, and violence, unfortunately, we had to flee and seek protection.



Man survives because of hope and desire. I know we all have some dreams that we have promised to achieve, but sometimes the situation is more difficult for a refugee. In addition to wishing, we should also try to maintain hope within ourselves because the only weapon with which an immigrant goes to the war of distress is hope.

I often hope for a safe, secure future, free from violence, where there is no fear, and I can live in peace. As a refugee, I wish for prosperity, peace, and equality.

Morteza is a young and dedicated person who contributes much to the JRS Asia-Pacific Office under the internship program. We are encouraged to do more; we are motivated to be hopeful and inspired by his commitment to improving the life of refugees.

World Refugee Day is a reminder that there is no 'us' and 'them.' There is only us, one human family, connected in ways we sometimes forget.

***Increasing global challenges
and instability are weakening efforts
toward achieving peace.***

***When hope is hard to find, divisions provoke
social conflicts, frustrations, and violence.***

***People forced to flee their homes
are among those paying the highest price.***



P E A C E W I T H G O D

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

JRS Asia Pacific would like to thank you for supporting us in promoting the rights and dignity of displaced persons.



TAKE ACTION
<https://jrs.net/en/take-action/>

