

diakronia

Serving refugees | sharing their voices

WHEN WILL I BE SAFE *in a NEW COUNTRY?*

New research from JRS shows often when asylum seekers come to the Asia Pacific, it is a roll of the dice for their futures

URBAN PLANNING

JRS from around the world met in Bangkok to globally strategize about urban refugees

DAWN RAIDS

Asylum seekers in Indonesia are being arrested. Why?

LEND YOUR LEG

For Mine Awareness Day advocates remind us there is still much to be done



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►► EDITORIAL



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

A world free of landmines and cluster bombs

Everyone at JRS lent their leg earlier this month, and I hope you joined too. April 4 was International Mine Awareness Day and JRS continues its work to advocate for a ban of landmines worldwide along with cluster bombs.

And while April raised awareness about mines, we still need to keep our sights set on cluster bombs. We were thrilled in 2008 when over half of world's governments outlawed cluster bombs. But it was short-lived. Recently countries like France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the UK, who signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, were under pressure from the US, China and Russia, supported by Israel and Australia to circumvent the ban that would allow them to use particular kinds of cluster munitions. It took vigorous campaigning to defeat their attempt.

A few months ago, a young boy picked up a bright metal object near his home in Cambodia (page 9) that turned out to be a cluster bomb. He died and was survived by his grandmother. And she has to go on, living in the same place where her grandson died, not knowing if there are more bombs or mines around her home.

But things are moving.

While we appreciate the generous assistance given to mine-affected countries to clear mines and assist victims, we continue to knock on the doors of countries like the US,

Russia, China, India, Israel and others to ratify the treaty and convention to pave the way for a mine free world.

Two landmine survivors in Cambodia have now become ambassadors to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions Coalition (ICBL/CMC) and great friends of JRS. Tun Channareth and Song Kosal have travelled the world with JRS and the ICBL pushing for real progress to end the use of the weapons that almost took their lives. Loosing limbs did not destroy their human dignity and they chose to rise above their pain in order to give voice to many other voiceless survivors.

While Mine Awareness Day is a chance to keep the issue current, it is also a chance to reflect. And in reflecting, it is a chance to be grateful. We are grateful to all of the survivors who fight against the use of landmines and cluster bombs. We are grateful to all of the survivors who continue to work in their community and raise families. We are grateful to the advocates around the world.

And we still pray that we will see a mine free world in our lifetime so our children will never have to lend their legs.

*Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy, SJ
regional director JRS Asia Pacific*

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Cover: When seeking asylum in the Asia Pacific it can feel like a roll of the dice when wondering how long you will stay before a solution is found. (Graphic 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.



JRS Australia Youth Awards winners ‘brilliant’

The third annual JRS Youth Award attracted a diversity of entries ranging from the clever and practical to the technically brilliant, with the Director of JRS, Fr Aloysius Mowe SJ, describing the winning entries as “haunting” and “brilliant.” The winners made an interactive game called The Road for a Refugee. “It drew the viewer into a game where we have to make the choices and experience the consequences ourselves,” said Fr Mowe. Another entry, Somali Refugees, was an outstanding entry that was well-deserving of first place, according to Mowe. “It did not look at refugees from a distance, or from the perspective of an outsider. Rather it gave the refugees a voice, and what a voice: eloquent, heart-felt, painting a world that spoke not just of the horrors that refugees flee, but also of the beauty of what they leave behind.” Somali Refugees has already been shown at two major events and received good reviews.

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

or find us on Facebook



Women's Day on the web

➤ JRS celebrated the resilience of women in the Asia Pacific throughout the month of March. Women live in vulnerable situations throughout the Asia Pacific region from border camps to urban apartment blocks. Over the past year JRS Asia Pacific has been collecting testimonies from women in the Asia Pacific. Read more at www.jrsap.org

Spreading compassion

JRS teamed up with Caritas Australia last month to promote Project Compassion, the annual fundraising and community engagement appeal. The project's simple, yet insightful message: “If you want Peace, work for Justice” – Pope Paul VI, was shared with people across Australia.



Being globally strategic

➤ After extensive consultation throughout last year, JRS published its Strategic Framework for 2012-2015, outlining broad goals, values, strategies and expected outcomes for the next four years. The 24-page booklet seeks to provide an inspirational framework and set overarching strategies for all 10 JRS regions to meet the challenges of working with refugees on the edges of humanity. The goals adapt core beliefs and make them relevant to the challenges of today: compassion on the edge of humanity, faith and justice, hope and education, and unity in action. Read the document in its entirety at www.jrsap.org



Aung San Suu Kyi wins

➤ Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD) won 43 seats in Burma's April 1 by-elections. She and the NLD will be the main opposition force in a national parliament dominated by the military and its political allies. She joins the parliament April 23 after living 15 of the past 22 years locked up by the former junta. Suu Kyi was released in late 2010 just days after a controversial election won by the military. Read more about the changes in Burma on page 8.



Fire threatens camp

➤ A forest fire broke out in a small section of Ban Mai Nai Soi refugee camp along the Thai/Burma border April 6. The section leader immediately alerted camp residents via loud speaker as refugees mobilised to extinguish the fire. Strong winds stoked fears the fire would spread rapidly from house to house, but prompt action to remove the roofs prevented disaster. Luckily, a heavy downpour helped extinguish the fire so no homes were damaged and no one was hurt. The Permanent Secretary of Mae Hong Son visited the scene and praised the camps section leader for their efforts to stamp out the fire, noting the disaster response plan was well implemented ensuring the safety of life and property.

STATELESS

Learning the law

➤ JRS Cambodia in April partnered with the Statelessness Programme of the University of Tilburg Law School to deliver a training for civil society on statelessness. The issue is of increasing concern internationally, regionally and within Cambodia. The training introduced the concept and international law of statelessness, and explored how statelessness can be prevented. Case studies from the region and internationally showed the consequences of statelessness and possible ways to resolve it.

Connecting with you

➤ A JRS workshop in February produced a new two-year communication plan to promote attention on refugee issues. Field staff met in Rome for a week of workshops and discussions on how to best inform, educate and motivate readers like you to action on issues facing forcibly displaced people. Seminars throughout the week spanned from writing for the web, using tools like Facebook and Twitter, and fundraising. Both social networking and multimedia were presented as tools to share the voices of refugees and forcibly displaced people, and quickly inform the public in the event of a crisis or new positive development.

UNHCR exits

➤ During a gathering at the presidential palace to mark the closure of UNHCR's Dili office in January, Jose Ramos-Horta thanked the UN refugee agency for helping see his young country through the humanitarian crises of its early years. UNHCR opened its office in 1999 and Timor Leste gained independence in 2002.





📷 The beginnings of a new community appear after Tropical Storm Sendong destroyed this and many other villages. (photo by Zarah Alih/ JRS Thailand)

Interreligious cooperation in flood-affected communities

Fortunato Anggot, 56 years old, has been a carpenter since he travelled with his father when he was 16.

"I've learned carpentry from my father, who was called to build houses in many places," he said while

fixing a window jam. Perhaps that explains why he has brought his own 18-year-old son along for this assignment.

JRS hired Natoy, as friends call him, to build permanent houses for the 50 Muslim families who lost their homes during the typhoon Sendong that hit Bubong, Lanao del Sur in December. It is the rainy season, so Natoy and his son are sheltered in the village hall where they live and work, shaping wood into doors and windows.

Natoy has been doing carpentry in post-disaster and post-conflict Muslim communities in Mindanao for four years. The JRS local partner, MuCAARD, first hired him to build core shelters for Muslim families whose houses were burnt

during the 2008 violence.

"I have worked in places where it is hard to sleep soundly at night. I always remember the exit route in case armed groups attack," he said.

But the Muslim residents here have assured him of his safety as he builds their houses.

"They respect me even if I am a Christian and I have no problem with them."

The place where Natoy lives is a mixed community of Christians and Muslims. His brother has married a Muslim. In 2008, his town in Kolambagan, Lanao del Sur was attacked by Moro rebels and houses would have been completely burned down, if not for the intervention of Muslim leaders living with them.

Back in Bubong, Natoy assesses the task ahead. He has already put up 15 houses with the assistance of the community. The family who will own the house helps haul the timber and provide an extra hand in the laborious process of roofing, walling, and flooring.

"I work as hard as I can and people know that. I have a commitment to build these houses for the typhoon survivors in this area," he said.

Louie Bacomo, JRS Asia Pacific regional programmes officer

! Tropical ruin: Sendong by the numbers

16 December, 2011
Sendong (or Washi) makes landfall in Northern Philippines

1,258 dead or missing

Largest tropical storm of 2011 in the world

10 hours of torrential rain cause flash floods

3.3 m (11 ft) water levels rose in one hour

50 houses built with JRS and the local community



Trapped in cities

JRS DEFINES GLOBAL APPROACH TO URBAN REFUGEES



From Bogotá to Bangkok, UN statistics show that most refugees around the world are going to cities. But do they all face similar obstacles in their new host cities? Are there common approaches JRS can take to serve refugees living in urban areas? At a global consultation meeting held in Bangkok between 19 to 23 March, JRS staff from more than 25 countries gave a qualified "yes" to these questions.

After four days of intense discussion and debate, quality, participation and learning emerged as the guiding principles for JRS work with refugees in urban areas.

Staff identified six priority areas for interventions in urban settings: access to services, psychosocial and mental health, education, material and basic needs, and legal issues, protection and rights. Guiding principles of intervention and steps to be considered when implementing projects in each area were also developed.

Isolation, restrictive and inadequate government policies and income all take on increased significance in urban settings.

"The enhanced commitment of JRS to quality programming in



📷 Top: Fr Ken Gavin, SJ, assistant international director speaks to JRS advocates from across the globe about issues facing urban refugees and begins discussing an international approach. Above: Fr Bernard Hyacinth Arumpathsamy, SJ, JRS Asia Pacific regional director, maps out key concerns for urban refugees in the region. (photos by Christian Fuchs, JRS USA)

urban areas may surprise some people. Let me be clear, we strive for quality everywhere. But it's so much more complex to work in urban areas," said JRS Assistant International Director, Ken Gavin SJ.

"Refugees become invisible in cities, and similar sized programmes cost up to 17 times more in urban areas, without any guarantee we're reaching the most vulnerable. We're trying to help refugees to access the public services of states which often do very little to serve their own populations. And businesses run by refugees operate in much more complicated environments. This is why issues related to quality, participation and learning are so much more pertinent," added Fr Gavin.

Winds of change in Burma

WITH THE SEEMINGLY POSITIVE CHANGES IN BURMA, ONE FORMER JRS STAFF MEMBER ANSWERS QUESTIONS ABOUT WHERE BURMA IS HEADING IN THE FUTURE, AND WHY.

In order to speak candidly about the situation in Burma, this former staff member decided to remain anonymous in this Q and A that originally ran on the Italian website Popoli.

Q: Do you believe that the present political developments are concrete?

A: Yes, in the sense that many of the changes that have been made in the last few months cannot be easily reversed.

Q: Are they going to bring Burma to a less repressive and democratic life for millions of people?

A: Yes, if they continue, but it is unrealistic to think that the road ahead will be smooth. The current government lacks the capacity to really drive home the changes: not just in terms of technical ability, but also because cronyism, corruption and worse, ethnic, class and religious divides will remain for years to come. The military continues to view ethnic minority groups with disdain and distrust, and vice versa.

At the same time, there is no doubt that many in the military are resisting a more open government.

Q: What are the events that most struck you?

A: The release, eventually, of most political prisoners in January is remarkable. Regardless of what happens within the military, these brave and committed people have shown since their release that they continue to dedicate their lives to achieving democracy and lasting national peace.

Just three days after their release many of the former prisoners formed a multi-faith peace movement at a Lutheran church in Yangon - with Hindu, Muslim, and several Christian denominations represented. These are movements that cannot be put back in a bottle.

One of the very first steps the government took was to increase the pension paid to civil servants, and announce increases in government spending on health and education.

The media have been freed from 50 years of draconian censorship, and the Burmese thirst for news and information is being satisfied by scores of weekly newspapers and monthly magazines, and now unrestricted access to the internet.

Q: According to you, what are the reasons that pushed the regime to make steps like pardoning some political prisoners?

A: There was movement from both the bottom of society and at the top of the power spectrum that happened to move in synch. Scores of brave individuals, including returned exiles with education and experience abroad, played important roles.



The Thai/Burma check point at Piang Luang, Chang Mai, Thailand. The area beyond the fence has landmines in place.

These movements showed that peaceful opposition could in fact be constructive; that they were not out to overthrow the government, but to make life better for people whom the government had ignored. Aung San Suu Kyi has played her own role in this too, taking a much more conciliatory line than she had in the past, not waiting for the government to play their hand, but willing to talk about compromise and a future of sharing power with the army, as must be, since the 2008 constitution allows for them to retain 25 percent of the seats in the national and regional parliaments.

To read the extended Q and A go to www.jrsap.org

Q: Do you think that international pressures played a role? That US, EU and Australian sanctions had an influence?

A: Change came mainly from within: sanctions and the isolation they both created and were symbolic of did not create the conditions for change, but they are playing a role now, perhaps in keeping those within the government who want a better future in Burma in a position of power.

The fact that the army made it difficult for INGOs to work in-country with expat staff meant they had to find alternative ways of delivering aid. In this the sanctions against development aid played a part, but so too, and perhaps more importantly, was the belligerence of the army, which did not want to admit to having failed to develop the country. Education opportunities for exiles, quiet engagement by experts, advisors, especially within the Asean region, all these things have played a part no doubt in bringing the changes we see now.

Q: What do you think could develop in the next months?

A: We can only hope that things continue to move along positively.



photo by Tess O'Brien/ JRS Cambodia

Choosing happiness

ONE GRANDMOTHER WITNESSED HER GRANDSON'S DEATH TO A CLUSTER BOMB NEAR HER HOME BUT SAYS, "WITHOUT HAPPINESS WE ARE DEAD ALSO."



Hardened, darkened, worn away by the sun, Yay Mao's skin has transformed into a leathery shield, protecting her from the outside world.

She sits wiping away the dust on the glass frame encasing the photo of Vutha, her grandson. Although only 5 months have passed since his death, the dust that has collected gives the impression that it has been years. It is the dry sea-

son here in Cambodia and dust chokes the air and invades every corner, every crevice of Yay Mao's poverty-stricken village.

"I wanted to die with him that day," she recalls with a furrowed brow, her gaze still transfixed by her grandson's photo. "We loved each other so much. We always ate together with one plate." She begins to pat her eyes with a handkerchief from one of the many village women that sit surrounding her. Here, mourning is a communal process and all the village women understand that well. "My tears drop everyday...everyday."

Vutha was only ten-years-old when he was killed by a cluster bomb discovered close by his home last October. Sadly, it was not the first time that these indiscriminate weapons have devastated their community. Some years ago, a landmine that had been lying patiently in their very own backyard since the 1970's also killed Yay Mao's daughter and niece. Roughly 40 years had passed since these landmines were first laid and yet their deadly legacy continues to haunt countless Cambodians.

When asked if there were more explosive remnants of war close by the village she shrugged their shoulders, "Probably... but what can we do? We must live." Refusing to be trapped by a mental minefield and with nowhere else to go, village life continues within a suspected hazardous area.

Yay Mao has not yet reconciled with this injustice she has suffered. When asked what she would say to the people who produced and laid these weapons, Yay Mao did not hesitate, "I feel as though I want to kill them the way they killed my grandson... It is not fair."

Little by little however, her Buddhist faith guides her forward. She finds solace in the local pagoda where she feels Vutha's presence; he had always aspired to one day become a monk. She sits and prays for these merciless weapons to disappear, for strength and most of all, for happiness. "Without happiness, we are also dead."

‘Mom, why did we move to Indonesia?’



Adelah sits for tea with her husband and JRS staff after a long morning baking bread and delivering throughout the Afghani community in her small town in Indonesia. (photo by Molly Mullen/ JRS Asia Pacific)



Adelah and Farzan woke up this morning around 4 and started their day. Farzan, father of two, took the giant mixing bowls down from the shelves to prepare dough and Adelah mixes it together to make bread. Just like the morning before, and the morning before that.

“Some mornings it is hard for me to mix the tough dough,” he said, revealing one scarred right hand that is just smaller than his left. “The Taliban broke my hand a few years ago and it healed on its own. Sometimes it hurts to mix with this hand. But if we don’t make the bread, we cannot earn money and our children cannot eat.”

According to recent research done by JRS the refugee status process can take up to 2.5 years in Indonesia without the legal ability to work. So these parents wondered how, new to a country where they knew no one and didn’t speak the language, how in a place where they couldn’t legally work they would provide for their children. They decided to bake bread.

The two parents had just escaped Afghanistan with their two children after the restaurant where Adelah worked was shot up in a skirmish between Taliban and government workers. Without the legal right to work, they decided to bake bread for the Afghani community in their Indonesian suburb to earn enough money for their family.

“We knew we were in an Afghani neighbourhood, and we Afghani people eat bread with every meal,” Adelah said. “I remember the first few weeks ruining the bread more than once. Or I would take it out of the oven and taste one realising I forgot something in the dough.”

But Adelah and Farzan are two of the luckier parents seeking refuge in Indonesia. Because Indonesia is not a signatory to the refugee convention many people are not able to find a way to make a living and rely on the meagre assistance of NGOs and church groups.

Others find themselves trapped in one of Indonesia’s immigration detention centres with their children. Because so many boats filled with asylum seekers transit through Indonesia every year, the Australian government has been putting money into building and maintaining detention centres in Indonesia so they never make it to Australian shores.

But Adelah and Farzan try not to think about that. They just try to make life as normal for their family as they can while they wait for their refugee decision from the UN’s refugee agency (UNHCR).

As they were finishing their tea, their oldest daughter Mariama came bouncing through the living room. She said hello to the JRS staff sitting there, in her best Indonesian and English.

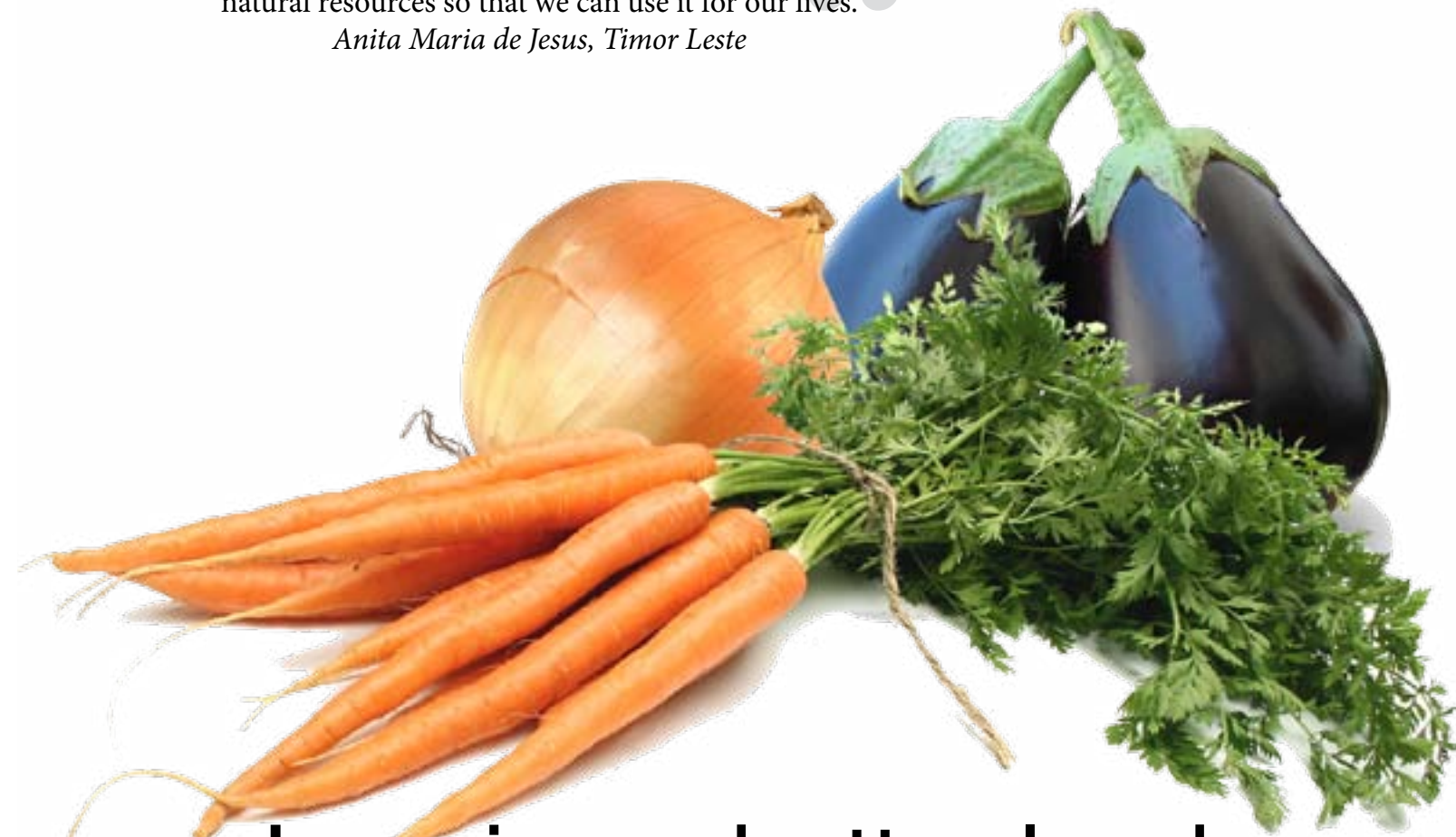
This seven year old is now enrolled in Indonesian school and spends her days off playing in the street with her Indonesian neighbours. And for all of the English she has learned, she doesn’t know the word “refugee.”

“My daughter asks me why we moved to Indonesia,” Adelah said. “I tell her because it is a beautiful country it is more fun here. I cannot tell her why we left or that we can never go back.”

“I cannot tell her why we left or that we can never go back.”
Adelah, Afghanistan

“Land, trees, sun and wind are available in our place, it takes part in us and in our lives. Hence it is important and our obligation is to love, protect and grow these natural resources so that we can use it for our lives.”

Anita Maria de Jesus, Timor Leste



Leaving a better land for our children



When Anita Maria de Jesus and her husband finished their education, they decided to do something different with her education: make the land better for their son.

Anita was born in Ermera, Timor Leste. After selling dry

wood in Camea Village, her husband had a change of heart about cutting trees and selling them. Realising that deforestation would destroy their country, he, together with village chiefs, organised a ceremony of establishing traditional rules “tarabandu” prohibiting people from cutting trees to protect the environment.

Anita got proactive too. She formed a women’s group (seven women and two men) and organised a farm that plants vegetables and sells the products in Dili’s markets.

Anita is excited about her groups agricultural activities and

there is strong sense they are all in this together. JRS provided seeds and agricultural training to the women’s group.

“It is better to work based on available natural resources rather than working on something that is not available to us. Land, trees, sun and wind are available in our place, it takes part in us and in our lives,” Anita said. “It is important and our obligation is to love and protect these natural resources so that we can use them in our lives. If we do this, the natural resources will never be scarce. This is also an important factor for our independence, our dignity and our love of God. We love what God has given to us because we can use these resources for ourselves and save them for our children and grandchildren.”

Anita organises the group’s daily work, takes care of their vegetables, cabbages, carrots and onions.

“My husband and I work hard together and love each other dearly. In this way can we can contribute to our family’s growth and development within our society and with peace.”



This new research acts as a practical guide for those providing services to refugees in the region, refugees themselves and international advocates

Connecting t.h.e d.o.t.s in the Asia Pacific

*research
conducted
by Nikola
Errington and
Taya Hunt*

When asylum seekers reach the Asia Pacific they may realise more than anyone what is missing in terms of their protection. Where some countries are successfully helping asylum seekers live in safety, others are lacking.

The truth is, protection space for asylum seekers and refugees in South-East Asia is limited and constantly changing. It is in this environment that asylum seekers and refugees must negotiate the difficult, long and confusing refugee status determination (RSD) processes that will ultimately decide the direction their lives will turn.

The Search: Protection Space in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, The Philippines and Cambodia in Practice is a practical guide which will assist other advocates to give accurate information to asylum seekers and refugees about the realities of protection space within the region.

In South-East Asia, where only three countries, Cambodia, the Philippines and Timor Leste, are signatories to the Refugee Convention the challenges of living in an urban setting are amplified on a daily basis as people struggle to make a living, avoid detention, send their children to school and tend to their medical needs.

This guide covers five broad themes: protection concerns, convention obligations and domestic frameworks, refugee status determination, durable solutions, and finally an outline of the realities of living in the region in relation to employment, education, health care and housing.

Given the range of challenges, it is essential that those that work with asylum seekers and refugees know as much as possible about the asylum options available in urban areas in the capital cities of Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Jakarta, Manila and Phnom Penh.

The focus of this research has been to emphasise the experience of asylum seekers and refugees, to let them tell their own stories, while at the same time compile the relevant contextual information that presents a broad picture of the current situation in South-East Asia. The asylum seekers and refugees who have willingly shared their stories, opened up their homes and lives for the purpose of this guide have done so in the hope that it may ultimately help others on the same journey: the search for protection.

Countries we
focused on:



CONNECTING THE DOTS

AN INFOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO

THE JRS RESEARCH AND REFUGEES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Populations of
urban refugees and
asylum seekers
according to
UNHCR data

95,900

Malaysia*

4,921

Indonesia

2,068

Thailand

316

Philippines

107

Cambodia

* The UNHCR Malaysia country website indicates that as of January 2012 the total number of registered asylum seekers and refugees is "some" 97,000. The UNHCR 2012-2013 planning estimates record the numbers reflected above.

KEY

ISSUES OF CONCERN

- 1 **Onward movement** from the country of first asylum due to protection concerns is common and asylum seekers and refugees in the region do not have adequate **access to information** required to make informed decisions about their futures.
- 2 Protection of asylum seekers and refugees is a **regional issue** which requires cooperation between countries, agencies and NGOs.
- 3 The **right to legal representation** for asylum seekers and refugees is not fully recognised by UNHCR and governments in practice, compromising the integrity of the refugee status determination process.
- 4 There are increasing **delays** for new arrivals to obtain registration documents from UNHCR confirming that they are persons of concern.
- 5 Countries in the region party to the Refugee Convention should not be **presumed to provide protection** for all asylum seekers and refugees simply by virtue of their accession.
- 6 **Detention** of asylum seekers and refugees in non-signatory countries is a protection issue within and of itself; steps to introduce alternatives to detention in the region have improved lives.

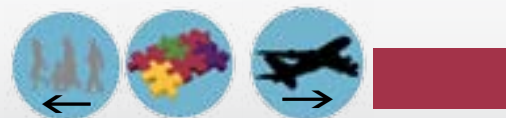
OPTIONS FOR

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Voluntary repatriation
A recognised refugee may elect to return to their country of origin.

Local integration
The host government allows recognised refugees to stay.

Resettlement
A recognised refugee must be re-located to another country.



THE REALITY OF DETENTION IN THAILAND

150

people in a cell at most at one time

WHAT DO THE REFUGEES SAY?

Millions around the globe continue to fight against human rights violations, discrimination and deprivation of their rights. **Billions of dollars have been spent** on military expenditures, but so little is spent on the weak sections of society such as refugees and asylum seekers...with meagre resources and ability, refugees and asylum seekers never run out of steam, we **struggle against all odds** and never lose hope in order to reclaim our fundamental rights.

Refugees living in Cambodia on International Human Rights Day, 2011

When I was 3 years old, **I was displaced**. Now, my son is 3 years old, and he is displaced. His mother died on our journey from Sri Lanka by boat.

I am doing this for his children, so **they won't have to be displaced**.

Kasun, Sri Lanka

ARRESTS, RAIDS AND DETENTION

Chronology of arrests of Sri Lankans in Bangkok

AUGUST 2010:

492 Sri Lankan asylum seekers board the ship 'SunSea' in Thailand arriving in Canada

11 OCTOBER 2010:

136 Sri Lankans registered with UNHCR are arrested in Bangkok and detained including **3** pregnant women and **30** children

28 OCTOBER 2010:

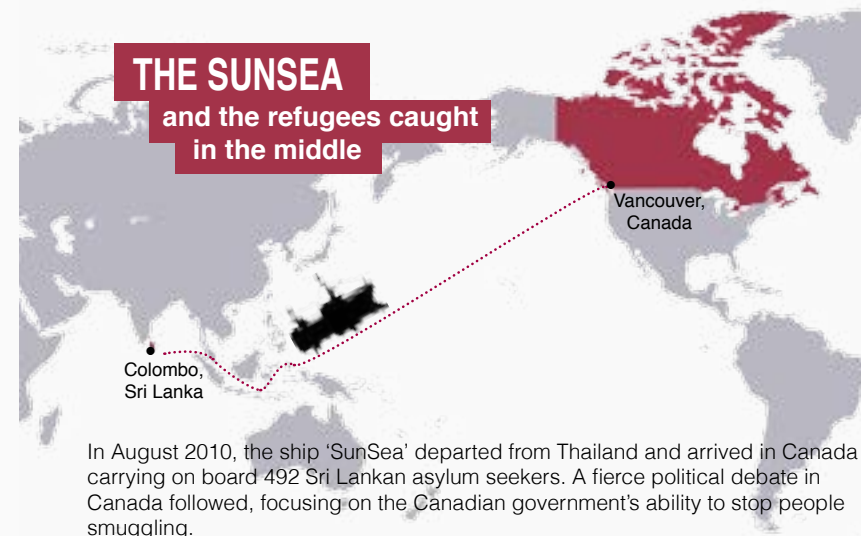
61 Sri Lankans registered with UNHCR are arrested in Songkhla and Hat Yai and transferred to the Suan Phlu immigration detention centre in Bangkok

8 DECEMBER 2010:

28 Sri Lankans registered with UNHCR are arrested in Bangkok

12 JANUARY 2011:

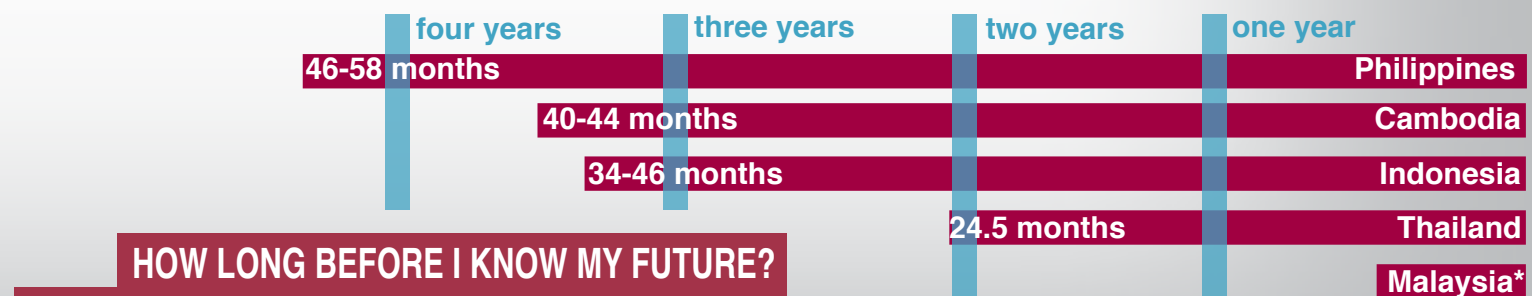
8 Sri Lankans arrested in Bangkok



In August 2010, the ship 'SunSea' departed from Thailand and arrived in Canada carrying on board 492 Sri Lankan asylum seekers. A fierce political debate in Canada followed, focusing on the Canadian government's ability to stop people smuggling.

Police began arresting Sri Lankans in Bangkok. Those who were arrested said authorities knocking on doors in the early hours of the morning carried with them lists of names of the people that were to be charged. Newspapers reported that the arrests had been the result of pressure from Canada to stop the flow of asylum seekers leaving from Thailand via boat to Canada.

In the following months an additional 97 Sri Lankans were arrested and detained within the Bangkok Immigration Detention centre.



HOW LONG BEFORE I KNOW MY FUTURE?

Average processing times for refugee status determination

*No definitive data about the refugee status determination process in Malaysia was disclosed by UNHCR (other than a 30 day period for decision appeals).

Find the full report May 15 at www.jrsap.org
or request your own paper copy

Lend your leg

JRS CAMBODIA KICKS OFF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR CITIZENS, POLITICIANS AND CELEBRITIES TO ROLL UP THEIR PANT LEGS FOR ONE DAY TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT LANDMINES.

The idea is to end the destruction caused by landmines within our lifetime.

How? By lending a leg, of course. Around the world, people are joining together in solidarity to take a stand, to step forward and to 'Lend a leg for a mine free world', all through the simple gesture of rolling up their pants leg.

"Lend Your Leg" was a month-long call to action beginning in March and ending on International Mines Awareness Day April 4.


"Through Lend Your Leg we want to wake the world up and see that by taking part in this simple action and by saying NO MORE to this injustice we truly can put an end to these weapons for good," explained Juan Pablo, Director of the Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines and creator of the Lend Your Leg campaign.

Since the Mine Ban Treaty became law 13 years ago, 80 percent of the world's countries have banned landmines, millions of mines have been removed from the ground and billions of dollars have been invested into land release, survivor assistance and mine risk education. But more needs to be done.


The mine ban treaty is not yet universal. The United States, China, India and Russia – the world leaders – have not signed the treaty. And for the first time in seven years, landmine use rose.

The human cost remains high. Last year's Landmine Monitor recorded 4,191 new casualties, nearly 12 people every day, mostly civilian and children. "I wanted to die with him that day," recalled Yay Mao when looking at a photo of her 10-year old grandson who died five months ago after discovering a cluster bomb in their yard in Cambodia.


The psychological burden carries on incessantly. Landmines are an attack on the mind and the body. Countless people knowingly live

 Song Kosal, International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) Youth Ambassador lends a leg at the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) ceremony 16 February, 2012. (photos by Tess O'Brien/ JRS Cambodia)




 Arrupe dancers perform a specially choreographed Lend Your Leg dance for Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, the Japanese Ambassador to Cambodia, and other Cambodian Government officials and advocates at the CMAC ceremony.



 Arrupe dancers perform at the National Mines Awareness Day ceremony held in Samlout, Battambang.



 photo courtesy of the United Nations



📷 A band made up of landmine survivors and people with disabilities plays at the CMAC ceremony.



📷 Deputy Prime Minister, Sok An, rolls up his pant leg in solidarity with landmine victims around the world.



📷 Tun Channareth, international landmine advocate attends the CMAC ceremony.

live and work in suspected hazardous areas with no choice. When asked if there are more mines or cluster bombs near her home, Yay Mao shrugged her shoulders, “Probably... but what can we do? We must live.”

“If accessing the only source of water for miles means walking through a known minefield, people will do it,” said Nick Roseveare, chief executive of Mines Advisory Group.

When Japan donated 16 million dollars worth of demining materials to the Cambodian government February 16, JRS Cambodia

kick started its campaign.

Sister Denise Coghlan, JRS Cambodia Country Director and Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines Director “rolled up” alongside the deputy prime minister and the Japanese Ambassador. The very day, German parliamentarians and human rights groups joined the campaign and “rolled up.”

You can be involved too. It’s easy – visit the website and find events in your area.

“We want to hear what Thailand, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea

are doing... We want everyone to get involved!” enthused Sister Denise.

The success of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) is a strong reminder of the power of civil society, and the partnership between NGOs and governments that this campaign represents. The adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997 was the first time a civil society grass roots campaign had ever succeeded in lobbying for a global ban on a weapon that had been in widespread use. For this achievement, the ICBL was awarded the 1997 Nobel

Peace Prize.

“Civil society, in partnership with governments won the mine ban treaty. Now come on! Lend your Leg and let’s do it again so that we can make a world cleared of mines where survivors live in dignity,” Sister Denise said smiling.

Tess O’Brien, JRS Cambodia volunteer

Surviving mines and war was just the beginning

HAN DOES WHAT SHE CAN FOR HER GRANDSON, GROWING UP IN A MINE-AFFECTED AREA IN CAMBODIA. SHE JUST TRIES NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT AND HOPE FOR THE BEST.



“If you write about my story, you’ll never finish.” Han chuckles to herself revealing a mouthful of dark, empty crevices. Han’s remaining teeth are yellowed and cracked, stained by the challenges and struggles that life has forced upon her.

In more ways than one, Han is a typical Khmer middle-aged woman. She doesn’t remember the year she was

born and tries not to remember the horrors of the Pol Pot era. She does however remember the day she stepped on a landmine. She was fifteen years old when she was ordered by the occupying soldiers to clear the forest, a tactic that was often used in the war to verify an area was clear of landmines and other explosive remnants of war before soldiers themselves would cross. It wasn’t.

Living in a remote village 60 kilometers away from Siem Reap hospital, it took hours to reach the hospital but had it been closer wouldn’t have made a difference. The blast had completely taken off Han’s left leg.


After a month in hospital, Han eventually went back to her village only to be thrown out of her neighbours home where she had been living since the death of her family under Pol Pot. Destitute and alone, Han lost hope. “I didn’t think that I could keep on living...” She leans back in her chair and looks down at her three-year-old grandson. He is playing on the ground beside her now broken, footless prosthetic. A moment passes before she looks back up and smiling warmly says, “but then my village leader started to help me. They built me a little house and slowly I got better... My hope came back.”

Sadly, like most Cambodian women, this incident marks only one of many challenges that Han has had to face in her lifetime. Only 45 (she estimates), Han has suffered the tragedy of having lost her husband and four of her six children. She struggles to support her remaining two children and two grandchildren particularly since the floods ravaged her village in September of last year, destroying the entire communities’ livelihood. No doubt, this will be a very hungry season ahead.

Han does not want to talk about the remaining landmines that she fears surround her village, the death of her children or the devastation caused by the floods.

When asked how she gets by on the more challenging days she suddenly throws back her head and laughs at the naivety of such a question. “No one else can stand up and take care of my family! I must continue!” The answer for Han was obvious.



 Han laughing with her grandson at the Metta Karuna Centre, Siem Reap, despite the challenges she faces. (photo by Tess O'Brien/JRS Cambodia)



Landmines in Cambodia

211 casualties in Cambodia in 2010

65,000 total recorded casualties in Cambodia

44 km cleared in Cambodia

2,153 casualties in the Asia Pacific in 2010

Information from the Landmine Monitor



My journey from Burma

After making it through to Thailand, Ma Yu is still wondering when she will be safe.




I am 45. I lived in Tar Kay and ran a small fruit and vegetable shop in Yangon. I could not make any profit because the local authorities regularly asked for money, so I decided to cross the border into Mae Sot district in 1996 to find other opportunities.

The journey from Yangon to Maw Lang Ein took a day by public bus. Then I had to take a boat to Hpa-An, where I caught the public bus to Myawaddy. There were five checkpoints, and I had to pay 200 kyat at each. At the last checkpoint the authorities suspected I would go to Mae Sot to become a prostitute. I had to show all my documents to prove that I am over 25. When walking across the bridge from Myawaddy to Mae Sot, I was hopeful for a better life.

I became a worker at a garment factory. I could earn 2,500-3,000 baht per month but after food and accommodation deductions I had 1,500 baht left. In 1999 I was arrested and deported back to Myawaddy when police began a crackdown on illegal migrant workers.

I was lucky again because I was brought back by the factory owner. Later I found another job as a housemaid with a couple who ran an alcoholic beverage shop. I got 1,500 baht per month.

 Ma Yu drew a picture with her story and said, “It was my previous house with my kids and landlord. The house was flooded in the rainy season.”

In 2000, the wife was seriously sick and before she died she asked me to take care of her husband, whom I called “dad”. I have to look after him and to pay for his medical treatment because I feel that he is part of my family.

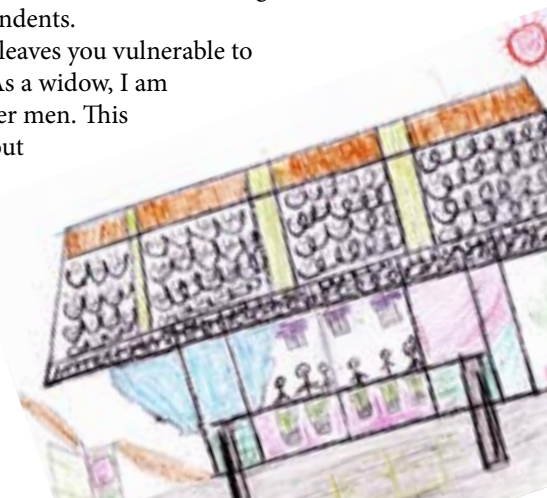
Currently I work as a cleaner at five places. Each month I get around 4,600 baht but it is not enough for my family. I take care of four kids, my previous landlord and myself. It is quite a burden for me but I’m happy to be with them.

In Mae Sot there is more freedom than in Myanmar, but my life would be happier if I could travel freely. Running and hiding from

the police is a kind of adventure for me when I go to the central market. What worries me most is illness. If I get sick, no one will take care of my dependents.

Being a woman leaves you vulnerable to sexual harassment. As a widow, I am always teased by other men. This makes me worry about my safety. If I had proper documents and legal status, I could go anywhere I want.

“Being a woman leaves you vulnerable to sexual harassment. As a widow, I am always teased by other men. This makes me worry about my safety.”
Ma Yu, Mae Sot, Thailand



Village by village

JRS is putting staff in each village to help streamline government and ensure women and youth have space to share their voices.



Last year, JRS in Timor Leste worked to strengthen local leadership in both villages and sub-villages. This year, JRS will continue its training and workshops to help develop a stronger relationship between local authorities and the government to ensure everyone has a voice.

Focusing on four villages, JRS placed staff in each to work closely with the village councils on peace and reconciliation issues, environment issues and management training.

But as the year went on, JRS expanded into other areas including prevention of gender-based violence. Rooted in a culture of peace, 86 people attended a training to promote peace in their communities, including peace within their families.

Income generation was another goal for the year. Poverty is at 41 percent in rural and sub-urban areas. Groups totalling over 70 people formed four agriculture projects and JRS ran a training on vegetable gardening which

included skills training on preparing soil, making compost, identifying soil types.

The markets in the capital city of Dili are now selling the vegetables grown by these groups – carrots, onions, and eggplants. The money earned from selling vegetables - more than \$500US for one group - is then collected and lent to individuals in the group to start their own small businesses.

When their own income is insufficient JRS teaches villagers to write proposals to fund their projects. The various groups wrote 21 proposals to the government requesting funding and 10 were approved.

Some extremely vulnerable people in their communities are now receiving new homes and villages are improving their sanitation, repairing roads and connecting electricity.

This year, JRS has begun involving women and young people in all of the groups JRS works with in each village to ensure everyone is represented at community meetings and has a voice.

In each village, meetings between local authorities, police, NGOs and community leaders are increasing.

Isidoro de Costa, JRS Timor Leste country director



📷 Fathers, mothers and daughters detained in an Indonesian immigration detention centre. (photo by Molly Mullen/ JRS Asia Pacific)

Dawn raids in Cisarua

Local governments are cracking down on refugees living in their communities. NGOs, including JRS are working to protect people from arrest and detention.

Systematic raids on asylum-seekers' and refugees' urban homes outside of Jakarta took place in early February 2012.

Approximately 150 people who were living in the community in cooperation with NGOs and registered with local authorities were arrested and taken to immigration offices.

“We were sleeping at home and police and immigration officials suddenly came in, put us in a bus and took us to Jakarta. I did not do anything wrong. Why did they arrest us?” asked Amiri (31), an asylum seeker from Afghanistan.

Amiri finally got back to his home in Cisarua later that night after he showed proof of being a refugee from the UN.

An asylum seeker from Sudan, Bushar (26), said, “They came to my house early in the morning, and I was not prepared. They took me to the bus and I saw more people in that bus, Somalian, and other Afghani. At first I was afraid because they caught only me, but I knew they also arrested a lot of people so I felt more at ease.”

Eventually those who held UNHCR documentation were permitted to return home, but those who did not have documentation issued by UNHCR were not released immediately.

Other reports were made in areas in central Jakarta such as in Petamburan, Tanah Abang and Jaksa. Immigration officials indicated these types of raids would be more frequent prompting concern for those that are yet to be registered with UNHCR, a procedure that has a backlog of around 9 months, and whether protection was sustainable for those living in urban areas.

Lars Stenger, communications and advocacy officer, JRS Indonesia



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