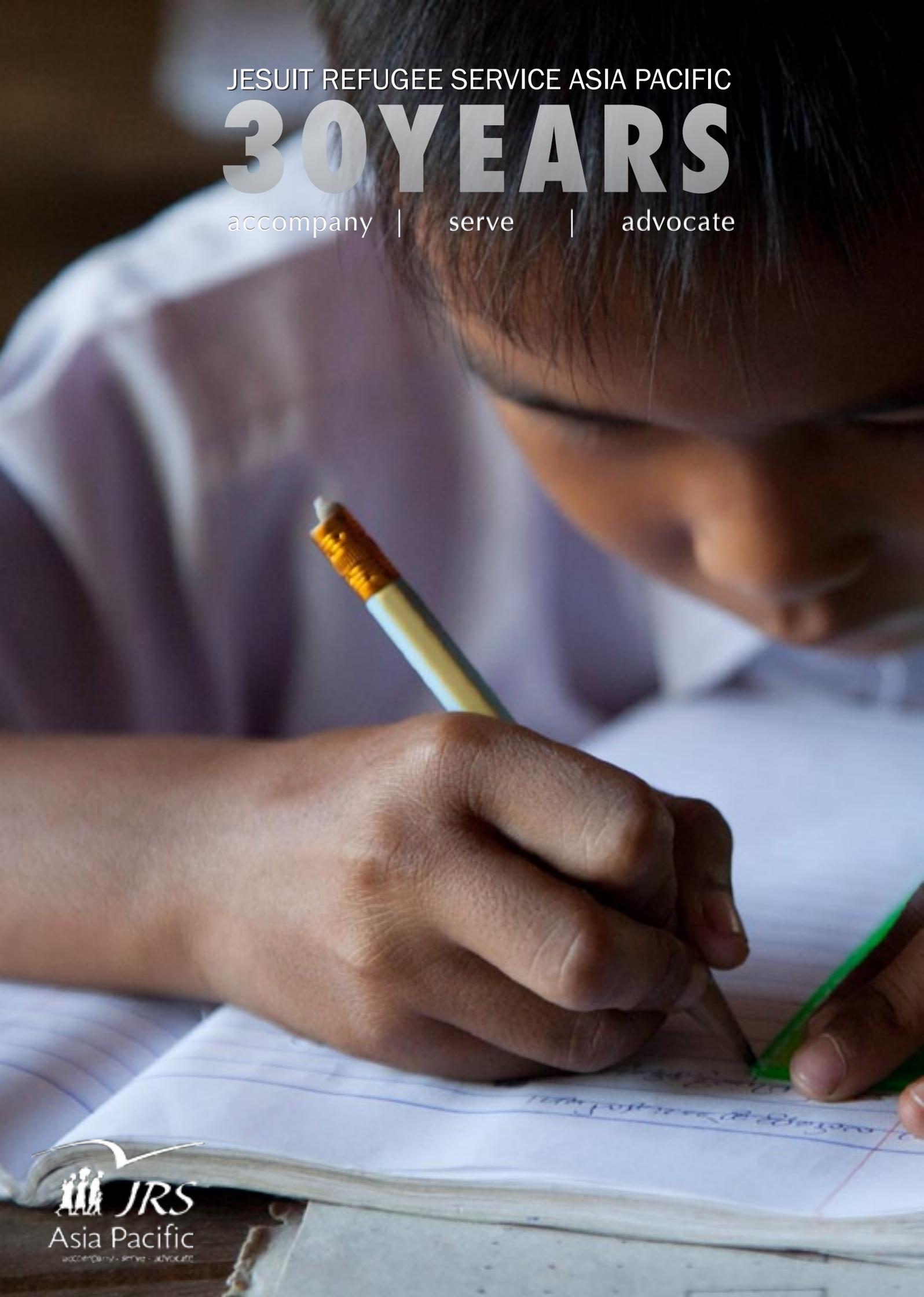


JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE ASIA PACIFIC

# 30 YEARS

accompany | serve | advocate



# Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific Marks 30 years



Cover Photo: A child studies in a learning centre for children of Burmese economic migrants in Ranong, Thailand. Photo by Don Doll, SJ.

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# Introduction

*Taken from the First Annual Pedro Arrupe Lecture  
On JRS' 30th anniversary in Rome*

Read the entire address at [www.jrsap.org](http://www.jrsap.org)

Three core insights came together for Fr Pedro Arrupe when he launched Jesuit Refugee Service 30 years ago. The first compelling factor was his compassion for the refugees in their suffering. "...last year, struck and shocked by the plight of thousands of boat people and refugees, I felt it my duty..." he wrote to the Society on 14 November 1980. For Arrupe the refugees were "signs of the times", a feature of his historic time that compelled a compassionate response. Second, having been Superior General already for 18 years, he had a strategic sense of how the Society worked and what it was capable of: its mission, structure and strengths. "This situation constitutes a challenge we cannot ignore," he wrote, "if we are to remain faithful to St Ignatius' criteria for our apostolic work and the recent calls of the 31st and 32nd General Congregations." Third, Pedro Arrupe had confidence in the goodwill and resourcefulness of the many partners willing to share in the same mission – "the active collaboration of many lay people who work with us."

Those same elements have helped to build the world wide project that is JRS today. If any of these elements is missing now, JRS would fall apart. First, JRS is inspired and instructed by the lives and experiences of the refugees – their lives inform our prayer, our discernment and planning, our way of proceeding. Second the Society, as a global body present in over 120 countries, adapting and trying to learn from each local culture, has a mission that is universal, to go by preference to frontier places, to serve a faith that does justice. Third, many friends and partners join this mission and make it possible. Many would never come to know us, and we them, if it were not for our shared solidarity on behalf of people in distress. They bring the five loaves and two fish that feed hungry multitudes.

All associated with JRS will tell you: "the refugees are our teachers". From them we learn much. As an organisation, Jesuit Refugee Service was built from the bottom up. Experiences in the field and reflection on those experiences gave JRS its shape. Its vision came from its founder Pedro Arrupe, certainly, its horizons are shaped by our reading of the Gospel, but each new programme is worked out on the ground with the people we serve, fitting their needs and mobilising their resourcefulness. Structure is not the end itself but rather a means to service. JRS had to be structured so that it could be true to its mission to "accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees." Yet we can own that mission because it is verified in our lived experience on the ground. For example the experience of *acompañamiento* for JRS workers in Central America gave new resonance to the meaning of 'being with'. When North Americans volunteered to live with communities of refugees

in El Salvador, local military knew that if and when they used US supplied M16s against those communities and if any American citizens were harmed, then military aid and external political support for the dictatorship would dry up. Just by being there, by accompaniment, one could protect human rights.

Looking through the eyes of the people we serve we are given a fresh view, a quite new perspective, sometimes of joy, sometimes of shock. Forever after the world is a different place. I met a Vietnamese woman who forgave, face to face, and in front of many people, the man responsible for the death of her sister and two of her children. Later she found her husband who had fled by a different route, and they started their lives together again. In a Thai camp I met a woman who looked after her two surviving children plus 20 orphans. Eight other children and her husband had died in Cambodia. She wanted to forgive her husband's killer and she prayed for the peace of her country. These women give reconciliation fresh sense. Every day in every camp, every detention centre, and in urban refugee settings, JRS people hear stories like this. Our primary service is to listen to the people, and by listening, to help them find courage to go on with life. What we have seen and heard changed our lives.

From refugees I learned that if you want to shape a vision of the future society for which we long, then go to the widows and mothers who have lost their sons and husbands to war. Those who have nothing left to lose are often the ones most free to imagine and to describe an ideal society, and they show extraordinary resilience and hope in pursuing their vision. "If it were not for hope," the proverb says, "our hearts would break".

The Ignatian spirituality at the heart of Arrupe's compassion for those in need is at the heart of JRS. First, by listening to the voices of these people, by contemplating the word of God, we believe one can actually find God in all things. Every encounter, every experience, every choice is an occa-



sion of grace. Second, spiritual depth, interiority: rehearsing our decisions in the imagination, we seek openness of heart to welcome the desire of God. Third, from this practical mysticism, one is free to commit oneself for service and action in response to the greatest and most urgent of needs.

In his last talk to the Jesuits in Thailand, Arrupe pleaded for Jesuits to pray constantly, to be guided by the Spirit, and to seek close union in every way, since refugee work is front-line work where conflict and hostile ideologies are to be expected. Refugees' voices are often unheard, unheeded, effectively silenced. Yet they are the gentle breeze, the still small voice of the presence of God of which we read in the story of Elijah. The one who accompanies refugees must know how to listen to the unheard, to the softly spoken. As Martin Luther King said: "a riot is at bottom the language of the unheard." The unheard are everywhere.

Listening to the refugees, learning like Elijah to know the presence of God in the whispers from the edges of society, we hear the message that another kind of world is possible. This helps us overcome the normal temptation to consider refugees as helpless, and to respond instead with solidarity. This is the revolutionary challenge of the Beatitudes: the call to a hard and disturbing love:

*Blessed are you who are poor. Woe to you who are rich.*

*Blessed are you who are hungry. Woe to you who are full.*

*Blessed are you when people hate you, exclude you, revile you.*

*Woe to you when all speak well of you.*

Refugees are people whose choices have been taken. For those who do choose to take their side, there is only one way forward, which is to listen and to learn from them, and to make tools, such as education, available to them, and to empower them to seek their rights. It is not enough, according to the logic of the Beatitudes, to accept the imposed solutions of the powerful.

The JRS story is about the lives and hopes of people whom we know personally. JRS opens a door of insight, beyond transitory and shocking images, into the inspiring efforts of people to defend their rights, protect their families and give their children a future. Fr. Arrupe was a prophet. His vision for JRS has not only given great service to people in need, it continues to bring wisdom and blessing to the Society and to all those who, through it, meet the displaced, dispossessed and 'unheard' people of our world.

*Fr Mark Raper, SJ*

1980-2010

Jesuit Refugee Service  
Asia Pacific  
Marks 30 years:

*reflections of those we  
have served with and among*

# History of JRS Asia Pacific

“...Struck by the plight of thousands of boat people and refugees, I felt it my duty to send cable messages to some 20 Major Superiors [of the Society of Jesus] around the world. Sharing my distress with them, I asked what they in their countries could do to bring at least some relief to such a tragic situation...”

Fr Pedro Arrupe wrote 14 November, 1980 when he officially started the Jesuit Refugee Service. Arrupe, then the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits, noticed the ability for Jesuits around the world to assist in refugee work.

Arrupe thought back to Saint Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus, who took it upon himself to house Italian people forcibly displaced in Rome during the winter of 1538. Because the winter was so harsh, people were forced into the city of Rome to seek assistance, but many died in the streets due to hunger and cold. Ignatius and his first fol-

*Right families say goodbye as Cambodian refugees are able to return home for the first time. Below a refugee survives a landmine accident. bottom Pedro Arrupe, SJ*



lowers gave their beds to those in need and took in 300 people into their home. Arrupe said JRS was following in Ignatius' footsteps by assisting the poor and displaced.

In 1981 Arrupe called a meeting in Bangkok to develop JRS Asia Pacific. He realised the need for emergency refugee care in the region and appointed a local staff of Jesuits and laypeople to do the job.

From an emergency response to crisis, the work of JRS expanded towards a longer-term commitment. The worldwide sympathy for refugees, which in 1979 had allowed so many to resettle, had diminished. Refugees were expected to wait in camps much longer, and were more likely to be rejected. They faced a correspondingly more unwelcoming

reception in countries of first asylum. Thus, the long-term needs of refugees received increasing attention—education, support of culture and the ability to participate in the decisions which shaped their lives besides the needs of food, medicine and shelter.

JRS' mission is to accompany, serve and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. JRS undertakes services at national and regional levels with the support of an international office in Rome.

Thirty years after the genesis of JRS Asia Pacific, the work has grown to assist forcibly displaced people in seven countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, the Philippines and Australia, with an office in Singapore. The staff has grown to include 137 employees and eight volunteers of different faith and cultural backgrounds.



*Top JRS staff celebrate 30 years at Xavier Hall in Bangkok. Above families leave refugee camps to return home.*



Fr Bernard Hyacinth Apathasamy speaks with a village chief in Bansayan, a border village in the Philippines. It is a village where recently returned people settled after violent conflict in 2008. Photo by Louie Bacomo, JRS Asia Pacific

## The art of accompanying, 30 years in the making:

An editorial from Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy, SJ

A mother spoke proudly of her son, “I can see that education has given him new self-worth and confidence.” She is one of the many parents who sends her children to a JRS-supported learning centre.

JRS faced many challenges when we decided to start a project providing education to the children of migrants in Ranong, Thailand. We were gripped by fear and frustration when working in seemingly dead-ends. We wanted to provide access to education for children who otherwise will have none. The fear was crippling efforts to think through problems creatively and constructively. Indeed, it was easy to quit.

We listened to many voices of stakeholders and of the people we serve, but were held back by our own fear. It took just one voice to calm the fears, the voice of a mother. It was enough for us to begin again, —to do the right thing, to tell us that our enterprise is worthwhile despite, or perhaps because of, the challenges. It resonates with our mission—to accompany, serve and advocate the cause of refugees and displaced people.

“Community participation”, “self-reliance”, and “self-sufficiency” are some catchwords we often hear in our work. What do they actually mean? They mean, in practice, we need to listen attentively to the voices of asylum seekers and refugees, displaced people and vulnerable migrants, and people held in detention.

It is significant that in the 30th year of JRS, we officially started using the term “people served”, instead of beneficiaries, clients and cases, to emphasise that they are people first and foremost, like you and me, sharing

the same dignity and humanity, with the same hopes and dreams of a better future.

Frequently the voices of refugees and displaced people are drowned out by special interest groups and governments. Their lives, stories and struggles are lost in the politically charged discourse. Underneath the root causes of displacement, lies hidden treasures—oil and gas, gold, minerals, and natural resources. However, what should be shared by everyone is taken by only a few.

In the post-World War II era, the international community ensured the protection of people moving from Europe. Today the tide has turned and the movement is reversed. People from unsafe nations are seeking refuge in nations with the ability and resources to help but they have shut their doors.

There are resources to provide for the safety of people fleeing conflicts, violence, environmental and natural disasters, oppressed by erroneous economic policies and development projects benefiting a minority. “The world has enough for everybody’s needs but not for everybody’s wants,” Mahatma Gandhi once said. It is still true today. Solidarity in practice means providing resources and protection for people in need.

At meetings with government and non-government agencies, the word “complex” is often repeated. All the resources and expertise in the comforts of high-level conversations are expended only to conclude that the durable solutions are too “complex”. The lack of political will and ideological interests prevent the use of resources to ensure protection for people forcibly displaced. Long-term and well thought-through solutions are short-circuited by immediate political expediencies and interests.

In the long run, we must seek to help refugees and displaced people to be less aid dependent and to take responsibility for their own needs while supporting them with skills and resources towards self-reliance. This approach ensures that their human dignity remains. In a milieu of aid dependency and a financial crisis, how can we work in a way that refugees and displaced people can take ownership of their lives and the services provided with them.

The idea of “empowerment” hides the fact that humanitarian agencies retain the power and resources. Agencies seem to come from the ‘outside’ to do things ‘for’ them and then leave. This is easy, but the easier way is not always right. How to engage in a participatory way where the community from the start takes ownership for the services provided with them through respectful discussions, listening and understanding towards making consensual decisions? From our experience, this way is indeed more time and energy consuming.

Spending time with the community, especially listening and understanding while creatively engaging with them, we find practical responses to problems. This paves the way to challenge the people we serve to take the reigns of the projects. This is integral to accompaniment. A true friend will also challenge the other towards what is right and good while being present in time of need. How do we ensure that our response is sustainable? In the end to hear from the refugees and displaced people saying, “We appreciate what you have done for us. Now we can do this on our own. Thank you. We no longer need you!”

If education, as human development, led a mother to voice that her son has gained “new self-worth and confidence”, our mission is made sweeter through our direct and personal approach to refugees and displaced.

It gives us hope to continue, perhaps another 30 years, despite all the challenges that delay durable solutions for forcibly displaced people.



# Cambodia

JRS has been working with Cambodian people since 1980, when JRS was founded. Once refugees were able to return home after the Khmer Rouge rule was over, JRS set up an office in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap working largely with landmine survivors and asylum seekers.



Sr Denise Coghlan stands with two of her former students when she was a teacher in a Khmer refugee camp. Photo by Molly Mullen, JRS Asia Pacific

## A response of love and service

Pedro Arrupe called for a response of love and service to the needs of people forced to flee their homes after the cluster bombs, guns, rockets and chemical weapons ravaged Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Much earlier he had tended the injuries of innocent sufferers from the atomic bombs dropped in Japan. From this call grew JRS.

Thirty years later, and I have been part of JRS for 23 of those years, it is a network of friends or indeed many networks of friends which include refugees, people who serve among refugees, academics, human rights advocates, the public who support the work from afar and in some places government and UN officials. The hope of all is that those who flee may live in freedom and dignity.

For many of us it has been an experience of meeting God in the most unlikely places and being blessed by some of the poorest people in the world. It has been listening to incredible stories, most of them true! It has been a place where involvements at the grass roots and advocacy at the highest level have worked together unto good. It has enabled the voice of survivors to be heard and international treaties to be negotiated. To JRS I owe many wonderful friends, experiences I could not have imagined and an admiration for the power of the human spirit to rise.

*Sr Denise Coghlan, country director, JRS Cambodia*

## Watching JRS grow



I was first hired by JRS as a night guard in September 1991. This was when the JRS office and house used to be near the Olympic Stadium in Phnom Penh, and it was an old wooden house. I knew the landlord, who told Sister Denise about me, and Sister Denise took me on as the night guard. Later, JRS needed a driver, so I worked both as a guard and driver. Now I work for JRS as a driver and a social worker. I have been with JRS for so long; JRS is a family to me.

Before I worked with JRS I was enlisted in the Cambodian People's Party army after the Khmer Rouge went into hiding. I spent about seven months in the forest on the Thai border fighting the Khmer Rouge. Many people died in my group of soldiers.

Between 1983 and 1984 I was sent to Russia for army training, where I learnt Russian and also how to fly Russian fighter jets. I stopped my training due to health problems, and I came back to Cambodia and worked with the military at the airport. After a few years, I wanted to

look for other work, and this is when I spoke to the JRS landlord and got my job at JRS.

I did not know anything about JRS before I started working here. I have learnt that JRS has helped so many people, both Cambodians and foreigners. People who work with JRS have been very kind and loving. I only spoke a little bit of English when I started working with JRS and since then the staff have taught me more and more. It helped that I knew some Russian because some English words were similar to Russian words.

Many asylum seekers in Cambodia have problems. Because they cannot legally work, they have nothing to do. Whenever I see them, whether it is in their houses during a home visit, or when they come to the office. I enjoy talking to them.

Sometimes refugees have to wait a long time for a decision on their case; it can be a slow process, and they have to be patient, and this can be difficult. Over the years, I have seen a few refugees get extremely frustrated with their situation here. Some get angry with JRS because they think we should be doing more for them, but in most cases, we are not the decision-makers. On one occasion I had to intervene when a refugee tried to kill himself at the JRS office.

When I see people we serve having difficulties I just try and be friendly to them, and talk with them. I see that this cheers them up. I like to make peace with people, and extend my friendship to them.

*Kim Phirum, social worker, JRS Phnom Penh*

## Hoping peace grows like a flower

I am grateful to be a part of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Cambodia. These opportunities have given me a chance to meet and work with many other people across the world. This has made me understand more about the needs of people and what challenges face different societies. I am glad to continue and join them because we are brothers and sisters even though we live in different countries, and I wish to spread the saying, “Every day I will do one thing to make peace grow like a flower.”

May we all live in a peaceful world.

*Song Kosal, youth ambassador to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines*

## An organisation I believe in

In 1993, JRS had a program to support those affected by anti-personnel landmines, other explosive ordinances and the civil war. After the conflict in Cambodia many people were suffering from many things.

JRS was one organisation that came to help the Cambodian people, they wanted to rebuild our country and give new hope to the people, and to give them a future. JRS cared about people and they treated the people affected by the war. They helped refugees come from everywhere to Cambodia to live and rebuild their lives.

JRS was an organisation that I believed in – many priests and many nuns used their real compassion, action and belief, and they showed us how to live, and how to share. We learnt from their compassion that they showed us, that they gave to everyone.

I joined JRS in 1993. First I joined the JRS wheelchair-making program. When I first joined, I didn't care about others, I only cared about myself and how to bring up my family. Then I joined the Campaign to Ban Landmines and then I knew how to help others, especially the people of Cambodia.

Now I am part of the JRS and International Campaign to Ban Landmines. I now have the opportunity to help others, it is a slow process but I hope it is successful.

*Tun Chanareth, landmine survivor and advocate for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines*



Tun Chanareth and Song Kosal, advocates for the International Ban Landmines Coalition. Photo by Lian Yong, JRS Cambodia.

## Serving with love and courage: a last letter



What I remember most from JRS was the great team both at the border camps and in Cambodia. The team gave me the energy to support my work among the poor. I loved the grace of being among the poorest ones but even more I remember the team and the Masses and sharing of life and faith that was so clear among us. We did not speak it out in many words but lived it together. Love was what bound us together and urged us on. The team gave me hope and a home and encouragement and laughter, and the opportunity to serve and accompany and advocate.

Now I am not able to eat and not able to sleep much just like many refugees and asylum seekers and poor families. Here they give me things for the pain.

I send a big love to everyone in JRS all over the world but especially to the ones who have known and loved me and I have known and loved in JRS since 1987. Have courage.

*Sister Marie Jeanne Ath*

*\* Sister Ath wrote the Khmer version of a hymn based on the Jesus' words, "Whatever you do the least of my little ones you do to me." Samon, a Cambodian artist, has sculpted the words for the reflection centre chapel.*

*Sr Ath passed away December 2010 in France.*

## Learning on the job

I have been working with JRS Cambodia for over 15 years. I can remember the time because I was pregnant with my son who is now 15. I first joined JRS as an interpreter for Vietnamese refugees and asylum seekers. I joined because I wanted to work with JRS.

I learnt Vietnamese while I was living in the Cambodian refugee camps in Vietnam during the time of Pol Pot. Even though I am now employed by JRS as a social worker, I still interpret for Vietnamese asylum seekers and refugees when they come to the office. As a social worker, I help to find housing for those people who need it, and I also arrange for essential items like blankets, pillows, gas cookers and things like that. I conduct home visits to make sure the refugees are fine, and also to get some more information about them that they don't tell us.

You can say that I have gotten to know a lot of the refugees very well over the 15 years that I have been here. I enjoy working with JRS because I want to work with refugees. JRS has given me much knowledge, and it has helped me to understand more about this area, and also the work of JRS. I still find my work very interesting.



*Srun Sony, social worker, JRS Phnom Penh*



A sculpture of a plane dropping cluster bombs hangs at the Meta Karuna reflection centre in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Photo by Tess O'Brien, JRS Cambodia



A group of Vietnamese women form an informal support group to combat isolation in Phnom Penn. Photo by Oliver White, JRS Asia Pacific.

## Work becomes like family



The JRS Cambodia team is small and tight-knit. Overseeing the refugee program are two social workers and myself, the legal officer, and our trio is guided by the indefatigable and ever-pragmatic Sister Denise (I don't know much about how Sisters attain Motherhood, but she is a bit like a mother to us – like mothers are wise and seem to know everything, they listen and give good advice. But then again she doesn't nag like a mother, so perhaps Sister is a more appropriate title!). Being a part of JRS feels like being welcomed into this small family, who have been working together for over 15 years.

Contrary to what is set down in the new Cambodian refugee law, those seeking refugee status in Cambodia wait indefinitely until a decision is made. One of the strengths of JRS is its mission not only to serve and defend, but to accompany; given the situation here (lack of opportunity, social networks, marginalisation from the broader community), I see the role of JRS increasingly as that of accompaniment through this difficult time. Sometimes the asylum seekers become frustrated at their situation, and much of my time is spent listening to them air their concerns and anxieties. I have learnt so much from my colleagues Sony and Phirum and their patience and understanding serves as a good example for me to follow. If I had to sum up what JRS means to me in a few words, it would be: family, patience, compassion, and of course, accompaniment.

*Lian Yong, legal officer, JRS Cambodia*



The chapel and lilly pond are but one part of the Meta Karuna reflection centre in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Photo by Tess O'Brien, JRS Cambodia



# Indonesia

Since 2000 JRS has been serving communities displaced by violent conflict in West Timor, Maluku and Aceh, people that lost their homes due to natural disasters and more recently asylum seekers living in urban communities and in one of Indonesia's detention centres.

## JRS is my school to become a Jesuit



Daniel Villanueva, SJ, in his thesis, states “JRS was (and still is) the most Ignatian institution I have ever known. So many things about it impressed me: the type of work, the way of proceeding, the radical orientation to mission, the composition of the teams, the flexibility of the institution, and the overlap between community and mission. Why is the Society not learning from JRS, which embodies Jesuit principles so well?” This statement expresses what I personally feel working with JRS for almost eight years. JRS has been my school where I can learn to become a Jesuit. In JRS I find a genuine Jesuit mission among the poorest. Jesuit life is based on mission, on being sent. Something is not working if a Jesuit (like me) is not radically available to be sent.

In JRS I find this spirit of availability. All JRS teams hold this spirit in order to respond to the needs of refugees and internally displaced people. Before signing one’s contract to become a JRS staff member, one must agree to be available to be sent to wherever JRS is present. I am personally amazed by our lay staff who express freely the spirit of our mission; willing and able to move from one place to another according to the needs of the people we serve.

And then there is the mission of the Society of Jesus. The Jesuit mission is “the promotion of justice and dialogue with culture and other religions in the light of the apostolic mandate to establish right relationships with God, with one another and with creation.” JRS is on the front line of this mission; JRS puts this mission into practice. JRS teams, especially those who serve the people in the field, often experience how hard the struggle against injustice is.

There are many lessons to be learnt working in JRS. On this occasion I would like to thank my team sincerely and JRS as an institution from whom I learnt and am still learning how to become a Jesuit. I am aware that you are my lay collaborators and colleagues, family and JRS teams from different backgrounds, including cultures and religions, have taught me how to be a Jesuit. I do believe if we — lay people, religious people or Jesuits — can faithfully hold the JRS’ spirit and mission in serving the poorest people, you can legitimately claim that you are a Jesuit. You are the people who live the Ignatian spirit, the spirit to work with and on behalf of God to fight for justice and peace for those who are oppressed and neglected. Congratulations to JRS for 30 years anniversary; congratulations to all of us at JRS.

*Adrianus Suyadi, SJ, country director, JRS Indonesia*

## Finding how to do with others, not for



“We are homo homini socius (a friend for others), not homo homini angelus (an angel for others).”

The sentence above describes how I felt when I first joined the JRS project in Betun, West Timor in 2000/2001.

Being introduced to JRS’s vision “the Kingdom of God is created for refugees through pastoral care and justice,” I realised that this description might oversimplify the depth of JRS’s vision and mission.

But in these simple words I also found a vision that is alive. When I see it being implemented within the current Indonesian context; facing the challenges of a pluralist society with immense poverty, and the persistent vulnerability to natural disasters, it connects the mission and vision with the reality of Indonesia in the midst of globalisation.

Currently I am responsible for administration and public relations in JRS Indonesia but the flexible nature of JRS has provided me with the opportunity to meet directly with the people we serve and enables me to actively accompany people that have lost their homes. I have been involved in the reconstruction of houses for poor families after the earthquake in West Java. The flexibility and simplicity of JRS has allowed many parties to work together hand in hand and to sing the song of a “Kingdom of God.” This is how I feel about JRS. Even if at times and in other places

JRS might sometimes face rejection, we keep moving on and remain loyal as friends who are ready to face criticism and rejection.

“In a material sense, I haven’t received much from JRS. Instead, I’ve got plenty of chances to serve others, especially my neighbours, through my involvement in reconstructing earthquake-affected houses,” said Mr. Eman, a carpenter who was involved in West Java Earthquake Response Program.

From the encounters with the refugees served by JRS, I have learnt a lot about hope. Similarly to Mr. Eman, I am also grateful because I can assist my neighbours as I do friends and share the journey of life with them.

In my opinion, they are strong people who run a thousand miles for the hope of returning home. Through these encounters I have found different expressions of faith, hope and love. At JRS Indonesia we have walked side by side with people whom we serve to fight for social justice and create a better world.

I can imagine the many challenges our JRS colleagues have had to face over the past 30 years. Many of these challenges have been overcome to prepare the fields of hope that are calling us to search for the meaning of the “Kingdom of God” to work on its realisation in the world that we share.

*Theresia Kushardini, public relations officer, JRS Indonesia*

## Going home to myself



Home! I've lost count of how many times I have heard that word spoken by those affected by conflict, or by those displaced because of their race, culture or beliefs.

Who on Earth would want to come to this place in the middle of nowhere and burn everything? The question echoed in my mind when I first arrived on the tiny island of Kesui, a part of the Indonesian archipelago. The population of some 5,000 Kesui had been torn apart by strife. At the time, JRS had been approached by a group of Kesui requesting assistance to bring their relatives home after they had been displaced.

A rather unusual request because those making it had actually been the foes of the displaced during the conflict; a request that would become the milestone for a unique reconciliation process.

It was only after months and years of travel from island to island, of being with the displaced and those who had stayed home, that we realised how complex and multi-layered the conflict was. It was often portrayed as sectarian – those who fled were Christians, those who stayed were Muslims – but the reality

JRS agreed to help with a Mosque-building project because village of Lawe Buluh Didi agreed to work together, a first for this community, and they signed an agreement promising to do so. Photo by Don Doll SJ.

was more nuanced. The conflict was also about the economy, wealth and greed. We discovered that the opportunities for the displaced to return home lay in the hands of a few individuals in both groups.

We had to start from the beginning with those we were to serve, but also as a team and with ourselves. We were dealing with people for whom professional terms and theory was meaningless.

As we were going to act as mediators, how these people perceived us and felt about us was crucially important. We felt that if we were to gain the trust of both groups we could only be ourselves throughout the entire process.

I felt strongly that the path towards reconciliation was for these two groups to sit and talk and share their feelings of loss and pain. Honest discussion from the heart that makes us human and connects us could bring them together.

It was a process of trial and error. We were continually reflecting on our work and within ourselves. Amid doubt and uncertainty during the process of reconciliation, I learned how precious truth, humility, patience and sweetness were. How they helped to renew relationships and served as a bridge for people to return upon.

The experience was like a process of going home to myself. I finally learned that home means getting in touch with myself, connecting with and acknowledging what I have received from above, and sharing that feeling of home with those whom we accompany, serve and defend.

*Taka Gani, programmes officer, JRS Indonesia*





## Sharing the beauty of life

I came to Indonesia as a foreigner but soon learned to love the people and the country with all its smiles and tears. More than that I became a friend of many people from many backgrounds, some in challenging situations with their fears and pains, but I found in nearly all of them a good heart and a smile. JRS enabled me to go to places I never would have gone and meet people I might never have met. Working with JRS was and is a very rich experience of learning to receive and give and moreover share the beauty of life.

As a non-Christian I was initially sceptical about working in a religious based organisation but soon learnt that it shares the same universal values of humanism and solidarity. JRS looks not only to serve and support the neediest but also is with them as a friend during people's most challenging journeys regardless of their religious beliefs. When visiting people in detention centres, plagued with uncertainty about their own and their loved ones future, or reconciling religious communities formerly in violent conflict, JRS staff live an example to others by showing humility and being prepared to be a friend to everyone. What I have learnt to love about JRS is the ability to laugh and the joy of bringing hope into people's lives. I found JRS highly flexible when attending to needs of those we serve and willingness to reflect on one's self and the surroundings.

Congratulations to everyone being part of JRS's journey of the last 30 years and thanks for giving me the opportunity to be a part of it.

*Lars Stenger, national advocacy officer JRS Indonesia*



Atambua, West Timor, Indonesia during a video message recording for relatives in East Timor. Many people moved across the border between Indonesia and Timor Leste after violent retaliations of pro Autonomy supporters against the Independence votes. Photo Taken by Monica Supriati/ JRS Indonesia

## Ten years of service

It all started from my angkot (public van) frequently hired by a group of priests and nuns who happened to stay in my uncle's house in Atambua. They hired me to drive them to do some assessments. One day in November, one of the priests named Fr Edy (then deputy project director of JRS West Timor) asked me: "Dare you to enter East Timor using this angkot?" Since then I have been involved in Jesuit Refugee Service's works in West Timor.

It was the East Timor post-referendum period when pro-integration and pro-independence groups, as well as neutral settlers were forced to escape into a safer zone. Day by day the numbers of refugees came by land, sea or on planes. The highest number of refugees came over land via the main gate of Batu Gede in Timor Leste to Mota Ain in Indonesia. They were harbored in bordering areas and some of them



were sheltered in Kupang, the capital city of Nusa Tenggara Timur Province.

Timor Leste refugees in West Timor and their countrymen in East Timor. I admit I got goose bumps when I saw lines of tanks and armored vehicles at the border. However, it turned out that I actually had



Two men in Aceh carry one of two JRS-donated tractors to a blessing ceremony. Photo by Don Doll SJ.

This wave of refugees started to decrease when troops from Australia closed all borders and controlled the security of East Timor. The largest impact from this closure was the disruption of information between Timor Leste refugees in West Timor and their countrymen in East Timor. I admit I got goose bumps when I saw lines of tanks and armored vehicles at the border. However, it turned out that I actually had to frequently pass them to carry out our task with other JRS team members.

JRS then initiated a program to enable the separated parties to exchange information by becoming information messenger between them. The information was exchanged through letters, photographs, and voice records. This activity seems very trivial and simple, but in fact was very useful for them to stay

informed about the situation. This small and simple program turned out to bear fruitful results because it aroused their longing to return to their homeland. I witnessed how they were emotionally touched when they received mails or recorded voice messages from Timor Leste.

There is an activity called *Jumpa Kangen* (longing to meet) or reunification which was facilitated by UNHCR in the Free Zone area between Batu Gede and Mota Ain. This activity enabled separated families to see each other again even though just briefly. Some of these *Jumpa Kangen* were followed up with reconciliation meetings and reciprocal visits by both delegates of refugees and their countrymen and women from East Timor. This finally initiated a repatriation process that JRS was actively involved in. There is one



JRS is involved in teaching disaster preparedness in Aceh Indonesia. Photo by Don Doll/ JRS Asia Pacific

unique fact about JRS. JRS was the only organisation which had direct access to the camp while other institutions always received threats from the militias. In my opinion, this is the strength of JRS, always supporting the poor and simple in its works.

I had never left my hometown before, but one day I decided to go to the other end of Indonesia, namely North Sumatra and Aceh. Tensions were high due to the presidential decree establishing this territory as a Military Operations Area. So, I moved from one conflict area to another conflict area. In early 2002 I moved from JRS West Timor to JRS Medan, which covered Aceh and North Sumatra projects. Here too, JRS gained the trust from people displaced in Langkat, most of them Muslim Javanese. JRS even helped relocate those who no longer wanted to return to Aceh. I participated in clearing up the wood, cutting down the trees, and building houses, while fighting

ferociously against forest mosquitoes. An experience I had never imagined before.

I continued to work with JRS although the work is slightly different now from the time when I first joined, especially the earthquake and tsunami survivors in 2004. For me, there is one thing that has never changed, something that keeps me here after a decade, namely the family bond between us. Everyone is present here. I myself have never felt restricted, and JRS has never betrayed its mission and vision. I think it would be hard to find this dynamic in other places. To me, JRS is unique.

*Hans Demu, JRS Indonesia*

# Regional office

JRS Asia Pacific was the first regional office in the world for the burgeoning vision of Fr Pedro Arrupe. It now works with eight countries, and 137 people who share in Arrupe's vision. JRS AP has grown to work in vastly different areas — landmines and cluster bombs, internally displaced people, immigration detention, education, emergency assistance, pastoral care, and counselling and legal aid for urban refugees — all with the same thread: walking with and defending people whom others may have forgotten.



## Accompaniment is...



...respect for the dignity and humanity of people who are forced to flee to safety especially the most vulnerable  
 ...being with refugees and displaced people in a direct and personal way  
 ...being present, listening, understanding and learning from them their dreams and desires  
 ...walking with them as friends through their sorrow and joy  
 ...being sensitive to their lives and stories  
 ...compassion for those who have suffered, remain vulnerable yet resilient  
 ...bringing hope where there is despair  
 ...encouraging their participation and responsibility in rebuilding their lives  
 ...empowering them while hoping the need for JRS diminishes  
 ...challenging them to determine their real needs against many wants and requests  
 ...avoiding paternalism in our mission  
 ...avoiding the creation of aid dependency

...seeking practical solutions with them for their benefit today and tomorrow  
 ...creating space for them to tell their own stories, voice their thoughts and desires of a just and peaceful world  
 ...being grateful to JRS staff who are deeply rooted in the lives of refugees and displaced people and committed to serving them  
 ...being grateful to JRS staff in the field as they diligently seek out those who are forgotten and not cared for, going where no one dares to go  
 ...being in solidarity with others who share a common vision with us for the service of refugees  
 ...creating alliances and relationships with governments and non-government agencies in order to advocate for the integral well-being and humane treatment of refugees and displaced people  
 ...sharing our faith and beliefs in our common action with a common mission  
 ...trustful-waiting for the right time while seeking the right solutions  
 ...partnership with donors, benefactors and friends who believe in the mission of JRS and continue to journey with us  
 ...being grateful for the life shared among people in exile  
 ...being grateful and privileged to participate in the life of God in exile  
 ...breaking and sharing bread with them as friends.

Thank you for the priceless lessons learnt from refugees and displaced people, JRS staff and volunteers, partners-donors, friends, governments and non-government organisations and more.

*Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy, SJ*

## When professional is not enough

I first joined JRS in 1997-1999 as a volunteer in Cambodia. In 2010, I began working in JRS Asia Pacific office in Bangkok. I spent the 10 years in between working with other development organisations.

JRS has a unique way of working with the displaced and refugees that I did not experience in many of the organisations I have worked with. When many would insist on being “professional” and the protocols involved in relating and working with refugees, JRS celebrates the personal and direct contact with the refugees and people served. In fact, this relationship is the anchor and compass of the people in JRS. This way of proceeding makes me appreciate more deeply the mission to accompany, serve and advocate for refugees.

After my volunteer years, I studied and trained to become a professional development worker. Working in JRS, I realised that “professional” is not enough; having a direct and personal relationship with the people I serve completes my service.

*Louie RM Bacomo, Regional Programme Officer*



## Remembering those served



Congratulations JRS on your 30th anniversary. It means that JRS has worked with refugees and vulnerable people for a long time.

It also means that there are still more vulnerable people to serve.

I have learnt a lot from JRS staff and the people we serve. They have taught me to live in the real world but not give up the search for a better world; we have to do it by ourselves. I wish that JRS and the people we serve hold each other's hands to cross the many difficult situations we face together. I wish that one day no one will suffer anymore.

*Sermsiri Ingavaniya, coordinator, Ban Landmine and Cluster Munitions Campaign, JRS Asia Pacific*



## My inspiration

I started working with JRS in 1990 as an administrator at Soi Luecha. At that time, JRS was still working in the Cambodian border camps. From time to time staff and volunteers would stay as our guests. I learnt a lot during this time and got to know many priests and volunteers. I would always ask myself, how can I support them?

There is one experience that it always in my mind. One day, Fr Pierre Ceyrac, SJ, who worked in the Site Two camp, came to our office with a Vietnamese lady. She had cancer and was very sick. He took her to the Chulalongkorn Hospital and then came to stay at our guest house. He talked to me and requested my assistance. The Vietnamese lady's name was Thong Dong May. She needed to stay in Bangkok as she had to visit the hospital many times. Fr Pierre asked me to take her to the hospital and help translate as she spoke very little Thai. In the beginning I was unaware of what her illness was.

I learnt that she needed chemotherapy.

She spent some time in the hospital and would then rest at our office and waited for Fr Pierre to take her back to the camp to see her family. She had one daughter. This continued for some time. Her health improved and she returned to the camp. I then heard that she was unwell again. Again, Fr Pierre brought her to Bangkok and the doctor repeated the chemotherapy. This time it was more serious as she could not eat and was very weak. I would always see her at the house and chat to her whilst she rested. She would always talk about her family and children; she missed them a lot. Sometimes she would bleed from her nose. Once I sent her to the hospital and the doctor said they couldn't help her anymore and sent her home. I contacted Fr Pierre and told him about this. He came immediately to collect her so she could stay with her family.

I then heard from Fr Pierre that she had passed away peacefully.

This was the first time that I took care of a sick person. I didn't believe I could do this but found inspiration from my belief that we must support both the poor and one another.

*Rachanee Serechithaweepong (Took), Regional Human Resource Officer*

Fr Pierre Ceyrac, SJ, was one of the first Jesuits in JRS to work in the refugee camps along the border. Among many other duties, Fr Pierre focussed on educating children in the camps and accompanying refugees during their displacement. Photo from the JRS Asia Pacific archives.



## A lifelong journey with the Jesuits



Because I have not been with JRS long, I will keep this short. I have respected and admired the Jesuits my entire life, before knowing that JRS existed. Then I had the opportunity to go to a Jesuit university, where I learned about Pedro Arrupe, and my admiration for the Society grew.

It is now, only when I have the opportunity to work for JRS – Arrupe’s vision – that I feel blessed, and closer to the men who inspired me than ever before. I am proud of the work JRS Asia Pacific has done in the past 30 years and hope to be a part of its inspiring future.

*Molly Mullen, regional communications assistant, JRS Asia Pacific*

## Hope and courage in accompaniment

Over the last 30 years, so many have carried us. One of the blessings of JRS is the opportunity to accompany people at intense times of their lives. That experience changes us for the good.

I learnt a little about hope over 20 years ago when I met a young girl on the Thai Cambodian border. She had walked with her family across Cambodia and a few days earlier had lost her legs and family when a landmine exploded. I clumsily asked: “do you think you’ll see your family again?” She replied “To live is to hope”.

Soon after, I learnt about courage from a Vietnamese boy. Referred for therapy, he had been mute for weeks following a pirate attack in which he saw his mother raped, his father beaten to death, and his baby sister drowned. He would paint pictures and after about eight sessions, he came and presented his last painting and finally spoke: “I’ll be OK; I can go forward knowing there is also good in the world.”



We’ve be shaped by our accompaniment. So many refugees endured privation and unholy abuse before escaping to seek a dignified life. They faced the perils of drowning, brigands, and landmines. They endured years of uncertainty in camp conditions. In their quest for something nobler for themselves and families, they suffered the anguish of leaving home, loved ones and the familiar.



A young girl from the Philippines stands in her home. Photo by Louie Bacomo, JRS Asia Pacific.

Many came to countries like Australia and encountered bureaucrats who hid behind bogus accusations of queue jumpers and characterless claims about border protection. These asylum seekers risked much for authenticity.

The experience changes those who accompany. Andy, a theologian visited the Thai Cambodian border during summer breaks 20 years ago. He still ministers in detention centres in Melbourne, writes passionately against those who punish asylum seekers, and gathers young adults beginning their journey into justice.

Mick spent a summer in the Philippines as a scholastic 25 years ago and built an on-line university on the Thai Burma border camps. He knows the value of education and the futility of years wasted in camps.

Sometimes we can only respond with hospitality and compassion in a cold and selfish world. But if all we have are pure intentions and practical effort, then we need never fear. Thanks to all who have been travelling companions.

*Fr. Peter Hosking, SJ*

## How actions and activities as a JRS volunteer have influenced my life

Volunteers participating in the Catholic Church's ongoing Social Apostolate work in Singapore, and a small team from JRS Asia Pacific met in Singapore in August 2008 to facilitate a better understanding of the social work of the church and to encourage them to undertake social action for human development.



Advocacy work, with and for, the poor, can ensure understanding of the mission and vision of JRS. A deeper understanding of the JRS mission and vision, and an understanding of the JRS style of advocacy

and orientation came from our focus on one of the most prominent issues and campaigns for JRS Asia Pacific – The Ban Landmines Campaign.

This simple coming together of JRS colleagues reinforced the lessons I have learned during my extended period serving refugees, the disabled and especially landmine survivors, whilst editing newsletters, contacting donors and whatever else needed to be done while fully participating in the work and growth of JRSAP as a volunteer. I began helping JRS by assisting Fr Olivier Morin with the Suan Phlu Prison ministry, then became an advocacy assistant, “Light & Dark” editor, Editor of “News from The Field,” and eventually settled down as coordinator for the Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions campaigns. The organisation of the Thailand Campaign to Ban Landmines was very fulfilling.

Another significant example of JRS's early response and far reaching influence on me was the JRS Colloquium on the “Comprehensive Plan of Action for Vietnamese Asylum Seekers” held in Manila in October 1992. The participants and the approaches used during this conference further encouraged my involvement with JRS. I learned a lot by helping with the organisations work under the guidance of Rev Alan Nichols.

JRS publications, “Light and Dark” and “News from the Field,” up until that time were a way to keep contact with former volunteers and present staff, giving both a chance to tell their stories. It became difficult to solicit reflections from the decreasing number of JRS workers, but “News from The Field” survived for years under Fathers Tom, Quentin, and Steve.

*Emilie Ann Ketudat*

## Ten years serving the Shan people



After I transferred from my position as the Shan project director nine months ago, it was the first I had returned to my previous work place. It made me realise that many things had happened since I arrived here in 2000. At first, I worked as project coordinator. At that time, the Chiang Mai border was the area that was hard to visit. Although it was convenient to travel by road, there were larger problems for the project, like no mobile phone signals or land lines. In order to work, my staff and I had to prepare everything necessary for the trip, including camping tents because we probably have to stay the night. The people we served welcomed us and took care of us the best they could even though they were poor. Sometimes we had to sleep at the churches or temples in the areas we visited.

We visited Shan people who migrated across the Thai border. Some were new migrants, and others migrated before our project started. We established lasting friendships, learnt how they lived and found the reasons why they came to Thailand. We heard many stories of misery and we realised that we needed to respond.

We started a project which provided refugees with essentials such as food, clothing and medicine. We asked the Shan community leader to take us to visit the families that needed urgent help. We saw many elderly people and children in their households, but often no parents. We were upset to find out that most of the adults had been soldiers. Many were killed, and others captured and raped or tortured in Myanmar. We gave these families clothing and medicine. When needed, we brought the patients to the hospitals in Chiang Mai.

We thought of our work like planting a garden. To start with, we dug the ground for the seeds. We watered the seeds, applied fertiliser and watched them grow. We hoped they could grow to be strong trees that could stand by themselves successfully.

I believe that there are still many JRS staff who have sincere hearts and pay strong attention to care for the trees the best they can.

*Wasin Chancham (Joe), Office Manager, JRS Asia Pacific*

## How to say goodbye



Fr. Arrupe never intended for JRS to continue for so long, and the fact that we are still here 30 years later is testimony to the intractable problem of displacement around the world.

Over the past year I have heard on a number of occasions the genuine appreciation from those we serve for not what we give but how we treat those we give to. Very often JRS is unable to provide anything other than an open heart, a friendly smile and the time to listen to peoples' stories of displacement, trauma and loss.

I have been deeply impressed by the strength and resilience displayed by those we serve; I have also been impressed by the depth of spirit and passion displayed by many of my colleagues.

Since arriving at JRS I have learnt more than I have given. I find the words of William Yeomans SJ humbling as he observes, "I go to work with the refugees not as one who is bringing something to them, but as one who has first of all to learn what I should bring." This is where I find myself. Wanting to give but knowing that I must first listen to those we serve to determine the best course of action.

Refugees and displaced people have often lost everything. Through conflict, economic hardship and environmental disaster they are forced to leave their families, friends, homes and worldly possessions. Often treated poorly and forced to live under inhumane conditions, they are forced into situations that strip them of their self-sufficiency; they are dehumanised in the press and arrested and detained like criminals.

The greatest thing we can do at JRS is to meet these people like the equals that they are. To show them love and compassion, to be present in their pain and anguish, to stand with them shoulder to shoulder in their time of need.

As JRS marks 30 years of service to refugees I think of the many people, staff and refugees, past and present, who have formed connections with each other over the years. Hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions of people have reached out to one another, have placed trust in each other and opened their hearts amidst conflict, trauma, pain and loss. This it seems is the core of JRS work. Accompaniment. Accompaniment by itself can be a powerful force, reinstilling a shattered faith in other human beings. But if we are to assist effectively we must share in their lives whilst ensuring we don't foster dependence. From the moment we meet we must be mindful of how we are going to say goodbye. Those we serve are initially friends who need us but we look forward to a time when the friendship is one of choice rather than necessity. Until that day, we strive to meet those we serve as equals, with love and respect.

*Oliver White, regional advocacy and communications officer*



A vegetable garden of a group of households JRS is assisting with seeds and training after they were reintegrated into communities after conflict caused displacement in Timor Leste. (Photo by Chanya Pacharatham/ JRS Thailand)

## Advocating for yourself, others

I have known JRS since 1999. Pi Ah (Siriphen Limsirikul) encouraged me to be a representative of Thai landmine survivors and participate in the Meeting of State Parties in Geneva. After returning home I became a leader for people with disabilities (PWDs).



JRS supports scholarships for children of landmine survivors. JRS also helps to build the capacity of the PWD group by providing support for writing proposals, establishing networks with concerned agencies willing to support the provision of prosthetic legs, wheelchairs and livelihood opportunities. JRS provides psychological and spiritual support for us and has encouraged me to be a leader of PWDs. JRS supports me to advocate at both national and international levels. I always share the information from the meeting I attend to the PWDs in my area. I hope JRS will continue to do good things like this forever.

*Wiboonrat Chanchoo, landmine survivor, Sakao province*

# Thailand

First, JRS Thailand had one mission: to assist Vietnamese boat people survive in an emergency. Next: assist Cambodians fleeing the Khmer Rouge. The office has now grown to six projects in the country, assisting people not only along the border but lost in urban areas or forgotten in detention centres.

In the refugee camp, Krung Jor, on the Thai/Burma border, one woman, makes bamboo baskets which sell for 2 baht each - an IGA project supported by JRS. Photo By Don-Doll/JRS International

## The invisible and the brave

You can be a psychologist, a successful businessman, a photographer, a community leader, but if you are forced to flee from your country because of war or conflict, your status, years of hard work and study can count for very little. If you don't have the right paperwork or can't prove you have the right qualifications then it's as if you don't have them at all. Finding themselves in a new land with an unfamiliar language many refugees and displaced people are forced to lower their heads and forget who they were before they became refugees. For those refugees living in urban settings, many are forced to knock on a stranger's door and humbly ask for a job, any job. If they are not successful then they are faced with the indignity of asking for money and handouts. They do what they must to provide for their families.

Imagine that. People who are forced to throw away everything in their search for security, only to be treated like second class citizens. At JRS, these are the people that we work for and I have the privilege to witness their bravery and resilience every day. Every time I meet someone who knocks on our door, I wonder what their life was like before they were forced to flee, what job they had and what they have left behind. I enjoy visiting our projects and meeting those we serve. It helps keep me focused and recharges my energy. On every occasion that I do meet those people we serve I am impressed by their dignity, strength, resilience and hope, despite the hardship and indignity they face on a daily basis.

*Widya Setiabudi, former country director, Thailand*

## Many thanks

The children and teachers wish you all the best. God bless.

Best regards,  
Khakham Suaikham

*Dek Mai Phai Center, Kung Jor camp  
Baan Kung Jor, Pieng Luang subdistrict, Wieng Heng*

## Working from the heart

I feel...  
JRS is a good organisation  
JRS is giving  
JRS does not want the compliment  
JRS works from the heart, is dedicated  
The things that JRS has done should be admired  
Like the song that JRS sings for God

*Alisa Srithanawan, nurse assistant, JRS Urban Refugee Project, Immigration Detention Centre*



## Blessings from Baan Lak Taeng school

JRS has supported Baan Lak Taeng School since 1999 with education and health care for the students that the parents cannot afford. On this occasion of 30 years of JRS, we would like to congratulate and thank you for your support. God bless all of you to be happy and continue to support vulnerable persons forever.

*Mr. Chang Khummai, Baan Lak Taeng school director, JRS Ranong*

## Humbly serving where no one goes

For 14 years I have loved, and highly valued the work of JRS. JRS is like a big family. JRS is truthfulness and honesty. The staff often work without reward from the people we serve. This is the identity of JRS.

Nowadays, JRS feels more like a company because of how we use technology. Technology has changed our relationships. With technology the communication between our brothers and sisters is through a machine rather than from person to person.

On this occasion of 30 years of JRS I sincerely hope we can combine this technology with our spirituality and still keep our identity. Thank you Fr Arrupe for establishing JRS to help the vulnerable people around the world. Thank you to everyone at JRS who keeps things moving. May God bless JRS with happiness and prosperity. I am proud to be a part of JRS.



*Vatchareeya Thanyaanphol, nurse, JRS Urban Refugee Project, Immigration Detention Centre*

## Looking back with a grateful heart

It's been five years since I started to work with the JRS team in Mae Hong Son, Thailand. As I look back, I can't help but feel a deep sense of joy and gratitude to the Lord for the special gift He has granted me in being one of those who was chosen and sent by our Congregation to work with JRS among our refugee brothers and sisters in the two Karenni camps of Mae Hong Son, Thailand.



For me, these years have been a moment of grace in my life where I see and feel the goodness, the providential care and love of God, our Father, for His beloved children in the camps. I perceive His abiding presence as I put into life the mission of JRS: to accompany, to serve, to advocate for the cause of refugees through the Pastoral Accompaniment Program.

Visiting refugees in their homes and shelters, listening to their concerns during the visits and the Friendship Group meetings, responding to their concerns through direct help or referring them to organisations that can help them are ways by which JRS accompany, serve and advocate for our refugee brothers and sisters in this part of the world.

*Sr. Evelyn de Alba, FI, JRS Mae Hong Son*

## Working on behalf of others



I have worked with JRS for about seven years on and off. Thinking back to when I first worked with JRS there are many experiences and memories that had an effect on me. I remember how when we started out, we worked hard to create what we have today. The dirt road was slippery as we crossed streams and rivers through the jungle. At the end of the journey a group of teachers were waiting for us to receive training. I shared with them teaching techniques, methodology, the psychology of learning, and how to make materials, songs and games. And I have learnt many important things from them too. The more I

shared, the more I learnt and the happier I became.

At Hua Hin our team took a well-earned rest and had a great time at the beach. Over time I have absorbed the mission, values and goals of JRS, the messages of accompaniment, service and defence of refugee rights and have taken these values to wherever I have worked. Thank you JRS for the opportunity to work with and on behalf of others.

*Pinanong Khoonukoon (Nam), teacher trainer, JRS Mae Hong Son*



Sr Madeleine Capistrano, FI, provides teacher training in Ban Mai Nai Soi Camp in Mae Hong Son, Thailand. Photo by Molly Mullen, JRS Asia Pacific.

## A vision of God's joy is JRS

JRS 30th anniversary is a year of deep gratitude and joy, a call for a greater commitment to the Lord in the service of His people, the refugees.

For me, life is always meant to be shared in fellowship – the joys and pains, opportunities and constraints we experience, the obstacles we overcome, the unselfish service of giving and loving – this has been my life experience with the refugees as I work in collaboration with JRS Mae Hong Son. These five years of loving service is a blessing. The work is tough and laborious, tedious at times but challenging and despite everything the Lord has granted me intense consolation no one can ever fathom.

Our Congregation of the Daughters of Jesus having an Ignatian spirituality, makes my work in collaboration with the Jesuits quite natural. Five years ago, as a response to the call of the Church in our Congregation to serve the poorest of the poor I offered myself to do pastoral care. I worked among children in a place that needed the most help in order to be in solidarity with them and to acquire a direct experience with the poor and the needy. And the answer was JRS – to accompany, serve, advocate and defend the cause of the refugees.

My first experience was when the JRS truck reached



Secondary school classes in the Ban Mai Nai Soi Camp in Mae Hong Son, Thailand. Photo by Don Doll SJ.

mountains, rows of trees and small bamboo huts. My heart seemed to be struck by something pointed, making me one with the Blessed Virgin when Simeon prophesied that a sword will pierce her heart. This reminds me as well, of the experience of our Mother Foundress Candida Maria de Jesus as she kissed the floor, the cradle of the Congregation in Salamanca, Spain exclaiming: “Here is my peace, here is my rest forever.” My feeling was indeed a mixture - a Christian paradox of joy and grief, of wonderment and unbelief, of exclamations and interrogations. From then on, my calling to be here and to hold His people in my heart was confirmed.

There were tough moments due partly to cultural

adaptation. I worked with Marcel, an ex-seminarian, my KnED (Karenni Education Department) counterpart, middle/high coordinator who had been helpful to me in my adjustment and knowledge of the refugee life. I have learnt to miss lunch, exercised patience when people do not appear on time and many others. All of these experiences I offer to the Lord and in His great love He has granted me freedom from superfluous needs leading me to a life of simplicity, inner peace and joy.

Besides the managerial work we also joined the special feast days celebrated in the camp like Christmas, Easter, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the Feast of the Nativity of Mary



A woman walks up one of the many dusty hills of the Ban Mai Nai Soi Camp in Mae Hong Son. Photo by Don Doll, SJ.

which also coincides with the Dee Koo Karenni festival. Sometimes Fr Bernard would come to participate in these activities. Two years ago on Easter Sunday, he concelebrated the Mass with Frs Mark and Dominic. They usually have very solemn Masses — everybody sings with all their hearts in full volume and the Church is customarily packed with Catholics. That day was made very special for them as we distributed Easter eggs, candies and cookies to all present. Indeed, it was a memorable experience for all of us.

After three years of full time service I still continue working part time, training English teachers for Vocational Non-Formal Education program and

teaching English to KnED head and deputy head teachers, staff and high school students. For me, this is a great challenge to live and to witness a call of a radical following of Jesus Christ, to do God’s will and all for his greater glory. I can never thank the Lord enough for all He has done for me. I only pray to be more open to the will of God with a generous spirit, unconditional love and total surrender. With a grateful heart to JRS in the name of Fr Bernard for giving me this wonderful opportunity to share in the work of accompanying, serving, advocating and defending the cause of the refugees.

*Sr. Madeleine Capistrano, F.I. Daughters of Jesus, JRS Mae Hong Son*

## Working with five project directors



I have been a JRS staff member based in Mae Hong Son since 2001. I have been given the opportunity to write about my feelings for JRS on our 30th anniversary and it is a good chance to share my good feelings toward JRS and staff.

JRS is like my second home because I spend more time at the office than my house. I even want to come to the office on the weekend. Everyone works with understanding and they are friendly and willing to help no matter who you are.

From 2001 until now I have worked with 5 project directors; they all are very good like my parents. JRS has provided me with a lot of opportunities; I have learnt English and something about different cultures. Since working with JRS my life has improved and there have been a lot of positive changes. God bless you.

*Danai Pongsawang, JRS Mae Hong Son*

## Watching the camps evolve



I have worked for JRS for 15 years. It has been a pleasure for me to witness the development in the camps, especially in the education sector. Students who were born inside the camps and have access to education can sometimes perform better than those outside the camps. The education will provide a better future for those who are resettled. I think living in another country can be a great challenge and education will help them.

Whilst working in the camps I have learnt that sometimes it is necessary be quiet, to listen to the refugees and hear their stories or sometimes tell a joke to lighten the mood. I sometimes notice as I am driving that during the trip home some staff are very exhausted and they do not want to talk anymore. I have learnt to listen and to empathise.

I think it is important for JRS to stay in the two camps until the camps are emptied, or until the refugees find a better life. I am proud to be a part of the JRS team.

*Pi Prachuab, JRS Mae Hong Son*



## JRS cares for me like a relative

Before I worked with JRS, I worked at Suksasongkhro Mae Hong Son School for eight years. I had never thought that I would resign or change my job. Unfortunately, my daughter had a motorcycle accident and became disabled. I have to take care of her. I resigned from the school and took care of her for 10 months.

One day, I received news from Pi Precha, the JRS driver. He said JRS wanted a housekeeper. I decided to apply for this job because I could work for half a day and then take care of my daughter.

JRS is like a relative who is taking care of me. Now I work for the whole day but I can always ask for time off to take care of my daughter. When my daughter gets sick, I can take leave so I can take care of her. I now have more money to use in my house and for my daughter. I would like to wish JRS well in its mission to help vulnerable people until they can stand by themselves.

Thank you very much.

*Pensri Jira-Adisihaworn, hospitality, Mae Hong Son*

## Understanding the spirit of our work

JRS is the first organisation I have worked for. JRS has taught me many things. I have learnt about refugees I never knew existed, despite their long stay in Mae Hong Son.

I have learnt about the work that is taught in and out of the classrooms. I have also learnt how to build good relationships with others. But my impression is that JRS is like a family, everyone is equal and if something is wrong you can discuss it no matter if you are the boss or the driver.

I have seen everyone helping each other. Sometimes there is work which is not under someone's responsibility but everyone is willing to help because of their commitment to working for the refugees. I think this is a rare thing and we may not find this spirit in other organisations.

*Prasit Boonlart, administratin assistant, Mae Hong Son*



## A new way of being present



When I was a novice in Scotland many years ago, our novice master faced the challenges of directing young men in the Jesuit way of life. In our little retreat he passed on the values that had kept him and his con-

temporaries fairly sheltered from such turbulence. His advice about how to “exit” after giving retreats, for example, was based on the premise not even to send a greetings postcard to a retreatant. Though this was his public advice, thankfully for his own sanity he didn’t subscribe to the practice himself. Had he been alive a decade later he would have been entirely happy with the idea of accompaniment as part of a Jesuit work — that of JRS’ triple mission of accompaniment, service and advocacy on behalf of the forcibly displaced, and happy with the notion that such

accompaniment could be long-term, constant and mutually fulfilling.

Although JRS had its official birth in 1980, Jesuits had been involved in refugee and displaced ministry from the start of their history. Saint Ignatius, their founder, had attracted the attention of the Dominican Inquisition in Spain: his teachings to them seemed dangerously heretical, and they claimed Ignatius was a refugee in Rome fleeing from their investigations. After their arrival in Rome in 1537 the early companions of Ignatius were confronted with a severe famine and harsh winter such that many people fled to Rome for help, and among them were the sick and dying. Ignatius was given the use of a house where initially 400 were cared for, but this number later grew to over 3000. All this while the companions were going through the discernment exercise



Mae Hong Son project staff. Photo by Yosep Yonal, JRS Thailand.

to found the Society of Jesus in spite of considerable Vatican opposition.

After the Society was founded in 1540, Ignatius continued to urge his followers to have concern for the poor, neglected, and those others who had been forgotten or ignored. While he was General, Ignatius’ own style of assistance, whether it be to prostitutes, beggars, or displaced poor from the countryside, was always discreet, considerate and aimed at long-term sustainability through persuading others to get involved in the work.

Like the rest of the world in late 1979, Pedro Arrupe SJ, was struck by the plight of the Vietnamese boat people, but rather than talk and offer symbolic gestures he wanted the Jesuits to be involved in a practical way. His style of governance had been to listen to many shades of opinion on the social questions of his time before issuing guidance to Jesuits and others. A similar model of consultation was initiated before the Jesuit Refugee Service was established in 1980. When JRS started there were about five million refugees — later we recognized and counted other groups of dispossessed people not categorized in 1980: for example, 26 million IDPs and some 12 million stateless persons. However JRS never lost the sense that it is a small organisation whose mission is not to be involved in massive humanitarian interventions but rather to offer a different, personalist service that has its foundation in the experience of Ignatius and the early companions — a service of accompaniment of those who are displaced.

The etymology of accompaniment is that of breaking bread with someone, and so it is built on the twin ideas of hospitality and sharing a meal. The biblical roots clearly demonstrate this twin foundation as a religious duty. The story of Job declaring that every sojourner will not pass the night without shelter (Job 31:32), I was a stranger and you took me in, says the Jesus of Matthew 25, and Lydia’s insistence in offering hospitality to Paul’s companions when they came to Philippi to establish the first Christian community

in Europe — “she would have no opposition” (Acts 16:15) — all point to the centrality of the New Testament law, to love one another as I have loved you, not contradicting but building upon the Deuteronomical injunction to love the stranger (Dt 10:19). Offering hospitality to strangers is not always a natural instinct, if we reflect on the current outbursts from politicians and opportunists who rail against the threat from outside, the danger from overseas, problem of the stranger-in-our-midst, the security risk from the foreigner, the menace of the Muslim, the spread of the terrorist. Modern discourse even at times seems to contradict the very value of spontaneous and natural offering of hospitality and accompaniment, argu-



A JRS truck on the way to Bam Mai Nai Soi camp in Mae Hong Son. Photo by Don Doll, SJ.

ing that modernity and security both require these values to be overlooked in favour of protectionism and isolationism.

Accompaniment then is quite topical, and it is one of the central ideas of JRS: it is both a dimension of all the work undertaken, as well as a specific sectoral activity. “JRS is an international Catholic organisation whose mission is to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people” [JRS Charter, #9]. Interestingly, the Charter document was not finalized until some 20 years after its foundation, whereas most organisations have their charter document as the basis of their initial foundation. JRS preferred to use an Ignatian methodology of see-judge-

act in the beginning, by building on experience that is reflected upon, keeping the structures light, and preferring to “facilitate the involvement of individuals and communities” first, thereafter “promoting regional and global cooperation and networking on behalf of refugees,” and only thirdly and lastly to “undertake services at national and regional levels with the support of an international office in Rome” [Charter, #9] Even these services provided by JRS to refugees are concentrated locally, with the headquarters merely taking on a support role. Colleagues from other NGOs were always amazed when I described JRS structure, for it seemed to them strange that a Jesuit organisation could be so decentralized.

As well as the distinctive feature of decentralization, a key feature of JRS that marks it out from other humanitarian NGOs is the focus on accompaniment. Accompaniment has three overlapping and mutually reinforcing aspects: 1) it is the critical intersect between faith and humanitarian action, 2) it is an expression of essential attitudes within JRS, and 3) it makes unique structural and programmatic demands on the work undertaken by JRS.

*Joe Hampson, SJ, former project director, JRS Mae Hong Son*



View from the high school onto the homes in Ban Mai Nai Soi Camp in Mae Hong Son. This camp now holds over 18,000 people. Photo by Don Doll, SJ.

## Accompanying the accompaniers



Working for JRS is not only an occupation. I enjoy driving, but more importantly I appreciate the opportunity to serve the good people and my colleagues at JRS Mae Hong Son. I have been with JRS since 2002. One of my most challenging times was when there was open shooting between Thai and Burmese military. The camp residents could clearly hear shooting. Under these circumstances, I needed to be ready to evacuate the staff. I was ready to contribute and to share in this responsibility.

Being part of JRS I see the importance of bringing education to the refugees in the camp. On one occasion I crossed the Myanmar border for fishing. A group of soldiers came up to me and my friends and they asked for money and threatened to kill us. When I was threatened, I asked the soldiers, “Are you not afraid of the law?” One of the soldiers answered, “We’re not afraid of law. We

don’t know what law is.” Along the rivers, bodies of villagers were sometimes found. If only, those soldiers were well educated and made to believe in the law then those killings may not have taken place.

*Pi Preecha, , JRS Mae Hong Son*

## Peace and happiness on this anniversary

On this occasion of 30 years of JRS, God please lead JRS to work as friends, to look after each other and to understand each other. This is a good time for us to reflect on ourselves and review our work. Thank you God for always accompanying us in the middle of conflict. Many innocent people are faced with a danger that they did not create. It is blessing that JRS is here to help. I miss the many friends I have made over the years from my work with JRS. I wish that both JRS and the refugees can live in peace and with happiness.

*Somnuk Sripornpoonsward, project assistant, JRS Shan*





Mary, owner and operator of Mary's House local orphanage, takes in at-risk youth and teaches English and keeps them enrolled in school. They learn weaving and gardening to support the orphanage's costs. Photo by Molly Mullen, JRS Asia Pacific.

## The children say thank you

All the children and teachers would like to congratulate JRS on its 30th Anniversary. JRS has been very kind to the vulnerable children. God bless JRS to have long life.

Best regards,

*Mokongsai Loonmong, representative of teachers from Wat Fah Wieng Wieng Heng, Thailand*



Around 600 Shan refugees live in Kung Jor Camp. Photo by Molly Mullen, JRS Asia Pacific.

## Becoming part of our community

I have been accompanied by JRS and believe it to be an impressive organisation. JRS does not only offer material assistance but also spiritual accompaniment. JRS treats the people it serves with respect and dignity. JRS staff make friends with those they serve and form good relationships with the community.



JRS staff are part of our community while they work with us. I often see JRS staff smiling and I can see in their eyes where those smiles were coming from. Their eyes show the deep love in their heart.

Whilst learning from the past, implementing ideas in the present and planning for the future JRS has assisted us by helping us explore past causes, resolving the present problems and providing education for the future.

The materials and support from JRS that my students and I rely on are very necessary things for us. I have heard from so many teachers and parents in the community that they are very grateful to JRS.

JRS has also helped us see how to become more self-reliant with activities like growing mushrooms, marketing for the weaving project and so on. In addition, it supports and encourages the health sector and others things which are important for our community.

Also, I am amazed that JRS has never tried to convince me of anything but rather allows us to make our own choices. I hope JRS continues its work and I am very grateful for all you have done. Thank you JRS.

*Sai Oo, refugee from Kung Jor Camp*



Zarah Alih, JRS Thailand Urban Refugee Programme psychosocial counselor, walks from the Ahmadi community centre where she taught English. She walks with Azhar and his family. Azhar was a translator for JRS Thailand until he and his family were resettled to the United States. Photo by Oliver White, JRS Asia Pacific.

## An instrument for others

Recently joining the Jesuit Refugee Service Thailand is a privilege and an opportunity for me. I consider it a privilege since I am given the chance to be part of a mission to serve people who are most needy. Furthermore, I strongly believe that it is a rare opportunity to be an instrument in assisting asylum seekers in their most vulnerable state. Hence, I am very honoured that at this 30th year of JRS I am able to share the responsibility of accompanying them towards the attainment of their vision.

*Zarah Kathileen T. Alih, psychosocial counsellor, JRS Urban Refugee Programme*



## Christ's work is human dignity

I worked with JRS for a year. The intentions for the Jesuit Refugee Service definitely come from Jesus. The work of JRS is based on mutual respect, human dignity and on the equality of all peoples. Therefore, to assist people in need we have to be careful not to reduce their human dignity or their potential and we must assist them to eventually stand on their own.

The mission to support the study of The Learning for Quality of Life Development Centre on the Thai/Burma border in Ranong is a great opportunity for us to implement the mission of JRS. Our work has many benefits for children from Myanmar who will now receive education. We hope that education will improve their lives and reduce future exploitation by employers as they will be able to communicate in Thai. At the same time, an increase in skills may help them to have more career choices. The best assistance we can give is education, because they can carry knowledge anywhere they go, whether they are in Thailand or elsewhere. JRS is a great benefit to Thailand across many areas and the Thai authorities know and appreciate the work of JRS.

On the occasion of celebrating 30 years of JRS I hope that all members would be moved profoundly and absorb the intentions of JRS into their lives. I pray that God will always accompany JRS in building His Kingdom on Earth.

*Sister Sirilak Suwapap, OSU, JRS Ranong*

## Education as a tool



If we compare JRS with a human, JRS has become an adult and now has the energy to struggle against the many problems in the world and stand beside the refugees and displaced persons.

Although I have not worked with JRS for very long, it has been a good experience. I have seen the many problems and difficulties that Lahu and Shan persons face due to the inequality in society. Education is the tool which can assist refugees to realise their rights. Education is important for everyone because knowledge will stay with people forever.

I am so glad to work here because I can help refugees even though I only play a small part in building their capacity and defending their rights. I am so proud to be a part of JRS.

JRS has provided me with such a privileged opportunity to work in education with the refugees in Chiang Mai. I feel so happy and would like to congratulate JRS on its 30th anniversary. I hope JRS continues to stand beside the refugees and displaced persons forever.

*From Areluck Phankhian (Ping) migrant education coordinator, JRS Shan*

## Learning to be creative in our service

At JRS we are constantly encouraged to question whether our projects are reaching those in greatest need, taking care to seek out those which others have left behind, while at the same time ensuring that we are creating durable solutions and not just 'sticking plasters' on quick fixes.

This mandate encourages us to be continually innovative. In Mae Sot, each new project and activity is designed carefully together with the community right from day one in a manner that it should become self-sustainable over time.



In this way, we aim to avoid creation of dependency and to instead provide long-term livelihoods and community development solutions for forced migrants and refugees, enabling communities to help themselves. My team and I are therefore grateful every day for this opportunity to be creative in our service of refugees.

*Jennifer Titmuss, project director, JRS Mae Sot*



A Burmese refugee displays the fruits of his labour. JRS supplies families with seeds to grow gradens, like this pumpkin garden in Mae Sot. Photo by Oliver White, JRS Asia Pacific.

## At the border we grow mangoes



I have worked for JRS for the past seven years. I am very familiar with the border area in Mae Sot, Tak Province. I would like to share a Karen poem with you.

“Thoo-law-kaw-hser-ler-t’-khaw, au-lair-law-per-kaw-yah-cor” or in English, “At the border we grow mangoes, we share our land our home is one”

The poem was handed down over many years from the Karen people who have lived along this borderline. The poem's message is that the best solution to solve the problems for people who are living in this borderline is to share; to share the land and to live peacefully together.

I find that working to fulfil the JRS vision and mission gives my life meaning.

*Sanan Santimanokul, project assistant, JRS Mae Sot*

## My eight years with JRS

I can strongly say to everyone that it's been a great opportunity for me to work with JRS as I have learnt many things from our work. I have many roles here. I have learnt from both my accomplishments and failures, and from my colleagues and the friends we're helping, refugees. So, JRS is more than a workplace. Whatever we are doing, let us do it as a team. I always feel that this is a family, and our refugee friends are also members of this family.

I'm not so sure what is going to happen tomorrow, but I'm quite sure that we're going to have something new to learn again.

*Wanrob Wararasdr (Toi), caseworker, JRS Urban Refugee Programme*



Representatives from JRS Singapore visit the Ranong project. Photo courtesy of JRS Singapore.

## Support from behind the scenes

JRS Singapore is a group of more than 50 volunteers who have found in JRS a channel to do God's work. Many of us have, in the course of this work, met with refugees, internally displaced peoples, and migrant workers in the region. We are touched by their kindness and hospitality, their resilience in the face of unimaginable obstacles and have been humbled by this experience.

Although we are not in the frontline of refugee work, we try to keep ourselves informed and in contact with those who are and work out ways in which we can help.

When I think of the many volunteers who have made personal sacrifices to keep JRS Singapore alive; meeting at night after work or during weekends, contributing generously to our appeal for funds, and helping out in one way or another, I feel very small indeed. And I'm reminded of a quote by Fr Pedro Arrupe: “Nowadays the world does not need words, but lives which cannot be explained except through faith and love for Christ's poor.”

*Cheong Cheng Guan, country director, JRS Singapore*



# Australia

JRS Australia runs a Shelter Project, visits the Villawood Detention Centre and works collaboratively with other refugee agencies, particularly in advocacy. JRS continues to research climate change-induced displacement in the Pacific, and recently became involved with asylum seekers housed on Christmas Island.

This photo was part of JRS Australia's Shelter Project where refugees held an art exhibition. Photo by Surdar.



## Hope and generosity

The two words that come to mind when I reflect on the last two years with JRS are hope and generosity.

Recently, I baptised a beautiful baby boy, born to a Sri Lankan couple during their time in detention. I had first met them on Christmas Island. When the baby was born, we agreed to baptise him as soon as they were granted protection and were let out. They decided to name their son Risen partly because he was born during the first week of Easter, but also because for them this name encapsulated the hope they had kept alive, against all odds, of a new life in a new and peaceful country. I have found this hope kept alive in the hearts of most of the asylum seekers and refugees I have met. I used to ask myself and others, “how are you able to keep on hoping despite so many obstacles and seemingly insurmountable challenges?” until one day a refugee friend said to me “I have lost everything, but the one thing I choose not to lose is hope. It is the one choice I have left and I will hold on to it as long as I am sane.”

During these past couple of years, I have also been struck by the constant generosity of those who are part of the wider JRS community: from staff to do-

nors to the asylum seekers and refugees themselves who despite their own struggles are often able to care for one another. Earlier this year, I was giving a talk to a group of kindergarten students about the plight of refugees. I was not sure how much they had grasped, until a five-year old boy raised his hand and said “Father, if the refugees don’t have a place to stay, they can all come and stay with me and my family.” Easy solution! Or perhaps not, but the innocence of that remark, and the incredible spirit of generosity it contained, represented for me an expression of what is possible if we all allow this generous spirit to imbue our lives.

I believe one of the great gifts JRS offers is the possibility for both this hope and generosity to be maintained and to flourish, and that is a great benefit for those we accompany, serve and strive to give a voice. But it is also a great gift for us, for it means that we too live our own lives in hope and surrounded by charity, big-heartedness and kindness.

*Sacha Bermudez-Goldman SJ, former country director JRS Australia*

## Resourced by those we serve



From my first JRS meeting in 1987 I have continued to enjoy how much JRS has shifted and changed to accommodate the needs of displaced persons in our world. When I first started working with JRS we placed considerable focus on the needs of the Indochinese people in refugee camps throughout South East Asia. With the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) the situation in South East Asia evolved to include detention centres, the screening of asylum seekers and the return of those found not to be refugees. Today we are still working in detention centres and assisting returnees. In addition we now have the amazing challenge of more than half of the world’s asylum seekers and refugees dwelling in urban settings. While JRS has continued its powerful presence in refugee camps we have now also taken up the challenge of how best to serve within these new settings.

One of the great strengths of JRS has been our very clear mandate of accompanying, serving and pleading the cause of the displaced. In addition, we have such great support and strength from the Society of Jesus, the wider Ignatian family and the many who have come to know us through working with us and supporting our projects. As one who frequently crosses borders I know the immense hospitality that follows from saying that I work for JRS.

The people we serve resource us along the way, their stories impelling us to respond, to share their situation and concerns. Our advocacy at every level gives comfort in the knowing that we are endeavouring to address the structural cause of displacement in a manner consistent with what we have seen and heard and experienced. My own recent work in the Pacific has led me to new insights into what it means to anticipate displacement and what communities experience long before they must move. In JRS there are always new insights to absorb and respond to.

*Sr Maryanne Loughry RSM, associate director, JRS Australia*

## Serving refugees gives meaning to my life

For the twenty years I worked with refugees, I was always connected with JRS. This began on a very part-time basis in Melbourne in 1986 when Chelso Romanin SJ ran the JRS office from JTC in Parkville. I helped with resettlement. The following year I moved to Adelaide and began my full-time ministry, being part of the local JRS network. Two years later, I moved to the Thai-Cambodian Border as a full-time JRS recruit. The rest is history.

As a Loreto Sister, being familiar with the Jesuit Constitutions and Ignatian Spirituality, it was a very small and very easy step to immerse myself within the JRS community. Not only did I enjoy the companionship over many years of like-minded friends and colleagues, but the refugees themselves and the work we did collaboratively on their behalf, gave great meaning to my life and I hope that I will always be a better person as a result of this experience.

*Sr. Margaret Burchell, IBVM*



## Offering shelter and accompaniment

In May 2007 JRS Australia decided to take a new approach to the work that we were doing. We could see that there was a huge gap in the provision of shelter and support for asylum seekers who were living in the Sydney community. Many were arriving alone with no ability to support themselves, and no idea how to navigate the immigration system in order to seek protection. We decided this was a gap that JRS needed to fill, and set up our Shelter Project so that we could offer direct service by way of accompaniment, shelter and financial support to this vulnerable group of people. This has grown from strength to strength and has given me a chance to meet many incredible people from all over the world, and to gain a greater understanding of so many different cultures and ways of life. We have a fantastic staff who are really welcoming to everyone who comes to the door.

I have always felt that the everyday work we do for JRS is like having an opportunity to travel without leaving the country! We walk the journey alongside people from every continent and learn an enormous amount about where they come from, and witness their courage and resilience every day. The sense of powerlessness that so many refugees and asylum seekers have to contend with, and the strength they show in coping with this, never ceases to amaze me. I see our role as providing a voice for people who would otherwise perhaps not be heard and I am very proud to be a part of that, and very grateful that JRS exists to provide this service to so many displaced people around the world. The power of accompaniment cannot be measured.

*Louise Stack, project coordinator, Shelter Project, Australia*

JRS Asia Pacific wishes to thank our donors, past and present, that make our work possible, including those who wish to remain anonymous.



“What you are in **love** with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what gets you out of bed in the mornings, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you. Fall in **love**, stay in **love**, and it will decide everything.”

*Fr Pedro Arrupe, SJ*  
*founder of the Jesuit Refugee Service*

