



Jesuit Refugee Service

servir

"In all things, to love and to serve."

St Ignatius Loyola



**JRS urban projects:
creating opportunities for
self-reliance and integration**

servir

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The Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic organisation established in 1980 by Pedro Arrupe SJ. Its mission is to accompany, serve and defend the cause of forcibly displaced people.

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A class of asylum-seeking and refugee women learn to sew in JRS South Africa's Arrupe Centre, which offers skills that help them get jobs or create businesses. [Sarah Carroll/JRS]



📷 Thomas H. Smolich SJ at the regional office in Bogotá, Colombia with members of JRS Latin America and the Caribbean. [Luis Enrique Piniilla/JRS]

Message from the International Director

“From its beginnings, the Society of Jesus has willingly participated in the Church’s ongoing dialogue with urban culture.”

Thomas M Lucas SJ, Landmarkings

This statement from Ignatian scholar Thomas Lucas SJ captures a key reality of the Jesuit mission: to go where the needs are greatest, where the greater good can be done, where more people can be served. From the beginning of the Jesuits in 1540, more people, more needs, more opportunities could be found in urban areas. Accordingly, the Jesuits have been an urban order from the start, putting ourselves at the centre of a city—whether that city be Rome, Philadelphia, Tokyo, or Beirut.

More than ever the reality of displaced people is an urban phenomenon. According to UNHCR, 60 per cent of refugees now live in cities, and nearly five of six of those displaced in their own countries also live in urban areas. From Quito to Kabul, from Jakarta to Nairobi, large

communities of forcibly displaced people can be found in urban areas. People forced to start their lives anew come to cities for their opportunities, and often, for the chance to blend in anonymously and leave behind situations of violence and danger.

Yet this is rarely an easy task. Refugees face all the challenges of urban migrants: culture clashes, affordable housing, employment, education. They also face additional hurdles such as irregular or undocumented status and no right to work legally, to name but two. Too often, forcibly displaced people carry with them the trauma and consequences of their journey: separated families, PTSD, and sexual violence being the most common.

Throughout the world, JRS accompanies, serves, and advocates for some of the city’s most vulnerable residents. We develop opportunities for education, life skills training, and psychosocial support. This

issue of *Servir* focuses on several JRS initiatives, which embrace the Jesuit dialogue with urban culture.

As you read of our work in Johannesburg, Indonesia, and Montreal you will see how JRS walks with our displaced sisters and brothers to provide hope, economic security, and integration into the urban fabric. In all candour, urban refugee work is challenging; those we serve are dispersed over many neighbourhoods, their situations are often complex, and urban programs are more costly than camp services. Yet cities are where refugee needs are great, and it is where Jesuits and JRS find ourselves at home. Refugees are creating new lives and creating new cultures in cities, and JRS is blessed to accompany them.

Thank you for your support of these projects, which allows us to better serve forcibly displaced people in urban areas throughout the world.

Thomas H. Smolich SJ

Assisting forcibly displaced people as encampment policies change

Johan Viljoen, Country Director

According to the latest statistics released by the Department of Home Affairs, South Africa is home to about 800,000 asylum seekers and 180,000 recognised refugees. An estimated 450,000 of this total live in Johannesburg. The largest groups are from DRC, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, with minorities from many other countries. South Africa is one of the only countries in Africa that does not have an encampment policy— asylum seekers and refugees are free to live where they want, work, study, and access government services such as health care, education, etc. But this is due to change.

Legislation is currently being prepared making provision for the establishment of refugee reception camps, where new arrivals will have to stay until their cases have been adjudicated. The legislation will introduce a provision for the curtailment of the right to work, as well as officially promote the adoption of a “first safe country of asylum” policy. This policy has, as of this year, been used to deport asylum seekers back to the countries through which they passed before reaching South Africa.

Forcibly displaced people in South Africa experience numerous challenges. They often face hostility from the public, which often results in violence and institutionalised xenophobia from officials. An example is the Department of Home Affairs Refugee Reception Office in Pretoria, which is fraught with corruption; asylum seekers and refugees have reported paying

bribes to enter the building to obtain necessary documentation. Some have been in the country for eight years or longer on asylum-seeker permits. The rate of approval of applications is very low—in 2015 only 4 per cent of all asylum applications were given status.

Despite being the largest economy in Africa, socio-economic conditions are complicated. South Africa has an unemployment rate above 30 per cent. Refugees and asylum seekers find it difficult to obtain employment or run profitable businesses. Furthermore, accommodation is scarce and expensive—a single person can expect to pay at least USD 200.00 per month for a single room.

“JRS promotes livelihoods initiatives through two skills training centres for women— one in Johannesburg the other in Pretoria.”

JRS operates two offices in South Africa: a main office in Johannesburg and a smaller office in Pretoria. Every refugee or asylum seeker coming to the office undergoes a thorough assessment by a social worker to determine their needs. They are then referred to the appropriate department for assistance. JRS South Africa aims to relieve the

immediate problems facing new arrivals, and search for long-term solutions to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers become financially self-supporting, and are integrated into the local society.

Refugees and asylum seekers who have been in the country for less than two years are assisted with emergency social assistance, such as payment of rent and food vouchers, for a period of three months. They also receive exemption from school fees for their children—where this is not possible, they are assisted with payment of school fees, purchase of uniforms, and transport to schools.

JRS promotes livelihoods initiatives through two skills training centres for women— one in Johannesburg the other in Pretoria. At these centres, women are taught English; when they can speak, read, and write, they choose from a variety of skills trainings: baking, sewing, hairdressing, cosmetology, and IT. Upon completion, they are issued with an accredited certificate, and given a start-up kit to enable them to create their own businesses— e.g., those who did dressmaking are given a sewing machine and material. They are then provided with ongoing monitoring and support, to ensure that their businesses do well.

JRS assists refugees and asylum seekers with healthcare through payment for hospital fees, transport to hospitals, and purchase of prescribed medications. A team of eight caregivers provides home-based care to chronically and/

or terminally ill patients, the disabled, and people with HIV/AIDS. Clients are provided with HIV counselling and testing, and with access to ARV treatment. Chronically ill or particularly vulnerable clients are provided with long-term support to pay rent and purchase food, as well as psychosocial support, counselling, and support groups. These vulnerable groups include

survivors of sexual violence—most female refugees from DRC have been victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and Somali women victims of female genital mutilation (FGM)—and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex refugees (LGBTI).

Forcibly displaced people are assisted with advocacy interventions and advice to assist them in obtaining documentation,

or appeal against rejections of their asylum applications. JRS is represented on various forums: the Coalition of Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CORMSA), UNHCR Protection Working Group, the Migrant Health Forum, and the City of Johannesburg Migrant Advisory Committee, amongst others. The Advocacy Department runs a special program for unaccompanied minors. Twice a year it organizes a direct engagement between refugees and various stakeholders such as the Department of Home Affairs, Department of Social development, UNHCR, and others. This meeting last year was attended by the Minister of Home Affairs. The Advocacy Department is also working with Somali women, to start a campaign against FGM that is prevalent in their community.

One of the JRS South Africa team members is a Jesuit priest, who provides pastoral care and accompaniment to refugees and asylum seekers, as well as the staff; a program focusing on care for aged refugees has recently been established.

The presence of a Jesuit priest as a full-time pastoral care worker is indicative of the changes that JRS South Africa is currently experiencing. Legislative amendments will no doubt increase the defencelessness of forcibly displaced people in South Africa, and we might soon find ourselves even more essential to this community's survival, as they are driven further to the margins. Some of our traditional project funding sources will continue to support their own priorities. However, JRS South Africa will persist with our accompaniment of populations that may not be prioritised by those funders. We must fulfil Fr Arrupe's desire: to remain faithful to the most vulnerable. ●

📷 Somali asylum seeker, Abukar, poses with the JRS community health workers, Fartun Tawal and Carl Chagweda, who help him with a septic wound. [Sarah Carroll/JRS]



Pizza, dessert, and dialogue

Imam Yahya Pallavicini, President COREIS

When Andrea Riccardi, Minister of Integration and International Cooperation of the Italian Government, invited me to join the Commission for “Religions, Culture, and Integration” in 2012, I did not know how to connect the experience of interreligious dialogue with the challenges of migrants and refugees in Italy. In fact, I was afraid that the discussion of respect for religious doctrines had become conflated with immigration issues in Europe. Two years later, the Ministry of Social Policy involved me in another interreligious commission, which would primarily deal with racist and gender-based discrimination.

In 2015, I first met with Jesuit Refugee Service and Centro Astalli in Rome. It was only then that I began to focus on interfaith cooperation in support of the dignity of migrants and refugees. I remember my first encounter with Thomas H. Smolich SJ (International Director), Aloysius Mowe SJ (current International Director of Advocacy and Communications), and Amaya Valcarcel (International Advocacy Coordinator) at JRS’s headquarters. My engagement with them inculcated a common understanding of the importance of brotherhood in action: to act together for the respect and dignity of all.

Later, I attended a presentation at the Gregorian University about the activities of Centro Astalli given by Camillo Ripamonti SJ (President) and Chiara Peri (Policy and Advocacy Coordinator) in collaboration with Cardinal Francesco Montenegro—then Monsignor and President of Caritas Italy. It was another

enlightening encounter with a discussion on fighting ignorance and injustice; faith and charity; prayer and fraternity.

Some question what the Islamic world’s institutions are doing for Muslim migrants and refugees; others instigate false narratives of Islam in Europe and radicalism. The Italian organization COREIS (Comunità Religiosa Islamica) along with JRS shared a joint statement during the Jubilee of Mercy that expressed a common concern for the respect of all migrants and refugees. I presented our statement at the September 2016 United Nations Assembly in New York in a shared delegation with the Secretary of State of the Holy See, Cardinal Pietro Parolin. In 2017, COREIS and JRS shared a statement that offered interreligious intervention in favour of bridges and not walls, addressed to the administration of President Donald Trump and his policies against immigration.

This year during the month of Ramadan, COREIS collaborated with Centro Astalli and JRS to inaugurate a program called *114 Pizza and Sweets* in urban

centres in Palermo, Vicenza, and Rome. The project was offered to migrants and refugees in 21 events for over 3,000 people. It was particularly moving to see young refugees rediscovering the sound of the call to prayer (*adhan*); sharing the simplicity of Italian cuisine; acknowledging the beauty of Ramadan with our brothers and sisters of various cultures and religions; and listening to the harmony of the recitation of the Quran.

We met women, men, and children from Sudan, Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Morocco, Senegal, Afghanistan, and Somalia. I heard extraordinary stories, and together we observed powerful moments of silence.

We shared all of this with Cardinal Peter Turkson of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. In a video recorded for their site, I expressed my satisfaction with our interreligious cooperation, which allows everyone to discover the value of the other along with work done in the name of God, and our common good in the common house. ●

📷 Imam Yahya Pallavicini, standing second from left, at Fondazione Il Faro, Rome. [Brette A. Jackson/JRS]





Forming urban spaces for future female educators

Orville Desilva SJ, Project Director

October 2017, marked the fourth year that I decided to serve with JRS-Afghanistan. The thought first crossed my mind while I was completing my philosophy studies in Chennai, in 2005. It was the same year that JRS launched its educational programs in Herat. Since then, many Jesuits and lay volunteers have served with JRS in different capacities and in various provinces of Afghanistan. After my ordination, I was assigned to a parish for socio-pastoral ministry for 18 months. As a young Jesuit, I was looking for challenging, apostolic involvement, and the thought of volunteering in Afghanistan revisited me.

Having spent the last four years in that country has afforded me grace and opportunities. As a frontier mission of the Society

of Jesus, it has been at times demanding, yet fulfilling. The JRS presence in Afghanistan is a concrete expression of our faith in God, who identifies with the poor and marginalized. It has been encouraging to see so many young Afghans, particularly girls, seeking to participate in JRS's programs.

JRS's educational curriculum in Afghanistan includes courses in English language, teacher training, IT, adult literacy classes, Konkur classes (preparing the students for the pre-university exam), an onsite/online certificate and diploma programs in liberal studies at the university level, and higher education training for the education department staff. The objective of these programs is to increase access to quality education to the youth of Afghanistan.

📷 Girls in Sharistan, Daikundi learning computers at JRS-KACSO learning centre. [Orville Desilva SJ/JRS]

“It has been encouraging to see so many young Afghans, particularly girls, seeking to participate in JRS's programs.”

Afghanistan

JRS educational programs have grown significantly. Initially, JRS volunteers were largely involved in teaching at the universities. This helped to establish direct contact with the students and the education department. Many of the university graduates who were taught by JRS volunteers are now either teaching with our programs, or hold key positions in the university's education department. JRS has now established several learning centres of its own; many are coordinated by local Afghan staff trained by JRS in Indian Jesuit institutes over the years.

JRS is presently serving in four provinces: Herat, Kabul, Bamiyan, and Daikundi. These educational programs are largely concentrated in urban areas, but always with the vision of reaching out to marginalized communities. Forced displacement—due to ongoing conflicts in rural areas, as well as natural disasters—has driven many people to live in informal settlements on the outskirts of the cities. Even when they can return to their homes, many refugees choose to stay in cities where there are better job opportunities and educational facilities that offer students hope for a stable future.

Every year, JRS provides around 9,000 youth and children with quality educational programs across different learning centres in the four provinces. In 2016, at the JRS Bamiyan learning centre, 832 students were trained for the Konkur pre-university exam. 801 students (420 female and 381 male) successfully passed and qualified for admission to various government universities or institutes of higher learning. This year in Bamiyan learning centres JRS is training around 7,000 students, of which 60 per cent are female.

JRS educational initiatives have an exceptional attraction.

True to its mission, JRS closely accompanies the students and inculcates the core values of service and compassion to both students and teachers. In 2016, a project called Each One Teach Some: Training Leaders for Tomorrow was launched in Bamiyan. The program was conceived to encourage motivated female students, who have successfully completed JRS English courses, to tutor English language skills to other young women in their neighbourhoods. This year, 20 female students are engaged in teaching English to others—and outside of their own work hours. Many women have willingly participated in the project: it has been an opportunity to give back to the community what they learned from JRS.

“This year there are 60 students pursuing the diploma program, and 70 per cent are female. The program provides students with a global exposure by allowing them to connect with other refugees in centres such as Dzaleka and Kakuma—in Malawi and Kenya, respectively.”

In 2013, in collaboration with Jesuit World Wide Learning (JWL), JRS launched its first higher education learning centre in Herat. The English language courses and the onsite/online diploma programs, which are offered in collaboration with Jesuit universities worldwide, provide access to higher education

to the refugee community.

This year there are 60 students pursuing the diploma program, and 70 per cent are female. The program provides students with a global exposure by allowing them to connect with other refugees in centres such as Dzaleka and Kakuma—in Malawi and Kenya, respectively. One female student told me that studying for the online diploma program has offered her a unique experience that has not only improved her understanding of the subject matter, but has also put her in direct contact with people from other religions and cultures.

In 2015, the second higher education site was started in Bamiyan. Most people living in this region are Hazaras, an ethnic minority in Afghanistan. In preparation, a group of students from Daikundi and Bamiyan were trained in English. In August 2017, the first two diploma students from Bamiyan successfully graduated from the program. One of them, Samargul,* recounted that studying in the program has helped her to improve her thinking and communication skills. More profoundly, the experience provided her contact with students from various parts of the world, which has allowed her to grow in mutual respect and understanding.

JRS educational initiatives have grown to be centres of excellence that above all provide safe spaces for girls to study and improve their English skills. These creative programs truly reflect the JRS Global Education Initiative (GEI) in reaching out to the vulnerable sections of society and forming future community leaders. It has empowered the students by giving them hope and opportunity to create a more viable future for themselves and for their communities. ●

*Name has been changed



📷 A beneficiary finds a moment of peace at the JRS UK Day Centre. [JRS UK/Fotosynthesis]

Resilience and community in the face of hostility

Megan Knowles, Communications and Development Officer

“We’re full.” “Go Home.” Leeches on the public purse.” Cowards for fleeing your own country, rather than staying to rebuild.” These frequently voiced comments represent just some of the outbursts that forcibly displaced people are exposed to daily in the UK. At JRS UK, we aim to counter this indifference by opening the door with kindness.

JRS UK has always had a special ministry to forcibly displaced people, particularly those who are held in immigration detention or have been made destitute by the asylum-seeking process. Today, they are among the most vulnerable group in the country, an intended target of government policies that work to create a hostile environment geared at making them feel unwelcome, and challenging their ability to persevere.

Asylum seekers come to the UK with the hope of at least regaining a sense of stability. They might have fled violence, suffered tremendous loss, or left behind all that is familiar to arrive on our shores. But once they arrive, many find difficulty accessing legal assistance, and the threat of not being able to remain in the country at all. I know an asylum seeker who described the passage to legal recognition as a “world of total confusion.” It is difficult for them to survive, let alone flourish, in a government-led culture of discouragement and hostility.

When a person claims asylum in the UK, many are at first “dispersed” to various areas of the country, and provided with a minimal subsistence allowance while their initial claim is assessed. Once a decision has been made, several things can

happen: if the decision is positive, they are granted protection and gain access to jobs and benefits. If they are refused, they often re-enter into legal limbo, and they may have to start the asylum process again—eligibility for government assistance becomes more complex, and varies from person to person. The worst scenario is that they may not be allowed to appeal the decision at all.

For those whose assistance has been removed, they become utterly destitute, with no access to the job market, no permission to rent accommodation, and no ability to support themselves. It is at this stage that many will seek support from JRS UK.

Put yourself for a moment in this person’s place: being unable to afford food or clothing, to top up your mobile phone, speak to

United Kingdom

your family, or make necessary travel to see your lawyer. This kind of powerlessness can inevitably lead to a loss of dignity.

Many of the asylum seekers we accompany spend their days moving from one charity to another, seeking help for their legal claim, trying to find hot food and a warm place, and surviving on second hand clothing and other handouts. Their daily interactions are about meeting chronic, basic needs through a series of transactional relationships.

In contrast, JRS UK creates communities of hospitality and works to instil in our beneficiaries a sense of self-respect and resilience. The JRS UK Day Centre is the hub of our work with destitute asylum seekers in greater London. While the UK government is wrenching up the drawbridge, JRS UK continues to welcome the stranger in a warm and inviting environment where each person and their beliefs is respected.

Alongside a hot meal and monthly toiletry packs, we provide a weekly travel grant that enables visits to the Day Centre itself, and to other services throughout the week. Often, this small cash grant is more than monetary; it can be an effective means to access potential justice, by allowing our beneficiaries to meet with their lawyer—to prepare for an appeal hearing, etc.

The availability of this travel grant may be the reason that destitute asylum seekers initially seek JRS's assistance. But in my experience, the quiet, unobtrusive accompaniment and support of JRS UK staff and volunteers is what forms trusting relationships.

The Day Centre primarily offers psychosocial support, so we promote a culture of listening. We offer our beneficiaries one-to-one advice and provide them with vital information. More simply, an amicable chat over a hot cup of tea and a biscuit or two, reinforces the humanity of this diverse

community, which is made up of asylum seekers hailing from Algeria, Burundi, Chechnya, Congo, DRC, Eritrea, Georgia, Iraq, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Mongolia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe, to name but a few.

The JRS UK Day Centre offers a range of facilitated group activities. The recreations and groups help to unearth and develop skills and talents, and encourage mutual sharing and support between people of varied backgrounds. One popular activity is a series of regular drama workshops that have been successful in encouraging members of the community to express themselves and their experiences in a creative manner.

Each day begins with a meeting and briefing between volunteers and staff, where we discuss the community's updates: we celebrate when our beneficiaries have shared good news—when children have passed their exams, appeal hearings have been successful, or when members of the community have enjoyed a photography workshop, etc. We are also there to console them in their setbacks and frustrations.

In June, a man whom I have come to know well at the centre was recently granted refugee status. During his time with us, he has become interested in advocacy policies—he often encourages other beneficiaries to better understand their rights as asylum seekers. After struggling with the courts for 14 years, he now has a chance for a better life. I hope this may be a reality for many more of our beneficiaries.

As the hostile environment gets tougher and more engrained into government policy, JRS UK remains steadfast in the mission that Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ gave us: “to bring at least some relief to such a tragic situation.” ●

📷 Accompaniment in action at the JRS UK Day Centre, with refugees and volunteers sharing a joke. [JRS UK/Fotosynthesis]





📷 JRS staff member, Diah, during a fun day event for refugee children waiting for resettlement out of Indonesia, in one of the refugee run education centres in Cisarua, West Java. [JRS Indonesia]

Forgotten refugees in Indonesia

Lars Stenger, National Information Advocacy Officer

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country and home to 250 million people, hosts 13,800 forcibly displaced people from 52 nations—e.g. Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Palestine, Sudan, and Yemen. Men, women, and children from ethnic or religious minorities (such as the Hazara from Afghanistan, Rohingya from Myanmar, or Tamil from Sri Lanka) have come to Indonesia during the last decade as asylum seekers and refugees, in search of international protection.

Indonesia, which produced refugees in the past, has not ratified the Refugee Convention

or protocol, but has so far mostly upheld its non-refoulement obligation. The country allows UNHCR to determine those in need of international protection, but had until the end of 2016 no clear guidelines for authorities as to how to handle their refugee population.

While some JRS Indonesia staff are present to provide psychosocial activities in only two of the thirteen immigration detention centres, which serve a minority of the 2,000 people who are detained under the immigration law, its focus since 2012 has been the asylum seekers

and refugees living independently in the community in surrounding areas of the capital city Jakarta. 40 per cent of people seeking asylum in Indonesia survive without support from the government or other humanitarian organisations; they are forced to use their savings and rely on money sent by family and friends. Many, at some point, end up in desperate situations without sufficient food or shelter. JRS Indonesia's "befriend urban refugees" project in West Java is the main service provider for the most vulnerable: those trying to survive the year's long waiting

Indonesia

process of receiving refugee status and resettlement.

We are confronted with difficult decisions as to whom is most vulnerable and deserving of our support. JRS Indonesia provides life-saving support towards housing, food, and healthcare to vulnerable families with children, and people with physical and mental health conditions.

Seven JRS staff members, from a variety of backgrounds, accompany those who have urgent healthcare needs, but are unable to pay for a physician's care at local medical facilities. There is also a cadre of volunteers who go with the refugees to local clinics to interpret their condition to the doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. Telephone or face-to-face requests for financial support towards housing and food are followed up by home visits, where individual needs and resources are evaluated, and decisions are made as to the most appropriate form of support.

Refugees with skills and talents are encouraged to volunteer their time as community interpreters or as English teachers in one of two JRS learning centres, where they help each other acquire important language skills.

First and foremost, we aim to be a friend during a difficult period in the lives of the refugees, whom we see as our brothers and sisters; we also strive to identify and realize solutions, and enable them to regain at least some aspects of normality and autonomy as teachers or students.

Recently, we have also encountered an increasing need to assist asylum seekers to learn about their rights. We established information sessions and individual consultations to keep them aware as to where they stand in the asylum-seeking process.



📷 Diah participating in a game with refugee children. [JRS Indonesia]

All in all, this year has not been any easier for refugees in Indonesia: many experience even longer waiting times and less prospect for resettlement out of the country. Such conditions have increased the urgency to explore new and creative possibilities towards a dignified life in exile. While the number of asylum seekers and refugees is small compared to other states, a harmonious and mutual engagement between forcibly displaced people and local communities is paramount. JRS Indonesia conducts public awareness and community engagement activities, such as inviting refugees to celebrate national holidays with the local community. Educating local students about forcibly displaced people, both living in Indonesia and throughout the world,

promotes greater understanding and tolerance.

We are encouraged by a growing number of volunteers, from both the refugee community and local Indonesians, who support and inspire our humanitarian effort towards better refugee rights and integration. Over the years, JRS has become a trusted partner of refugees and their host communities; part of our mission is finding solutions towards a better and safer future for both.

Within the financial and human limitations that we experience, we are committed to do our best to enable our brothers and sisters seeking international protection, the ability to overcome the adversities of the past and move into a more stable future—wherever it might be. ●

The impossibility of integration without inclusion

Jose Fernando López Forero, Country Director
With contribution from Diana Marcela Rueda Vargas,
Regional Communications Officer

Forcibly displaced people often arrive in host communities with limited or no financial resources; this, coupled with their lack of legal status, increases their vulnerability, and can hamper opportunities for successful integration. To aid asylum seekers and refugees in assimilating into new environments, two essential forms of intervention must be implemented by those who assist them.

First, forcibly displaced people require comprehensive assistance in order to understand their legal rights. In a majority of cases, this involves complex, bureaucratic

procedures which, although necessary, can be used as a form of systemic discrimination by the respective government. Asylum seekers are often subjected to discrimination from migration officers, who impede the documentation process—in turn, lack of proper documentation can lead to further discrimination, such as preventing asylum-seeking parents to enrol their children in school or gain access to other social services. Ecuador is a country with a broad constitution for foreigners. However, the application process for refugee status is complicated

and protracted, so many asylum seekers prefer to apply for more assessable working visas; these give them freedom of movement and access to employment, but minimal access to legal rights and protection.

Second, leaving one's country out of necessity and not by choice can be traumatic. Therefore, those suffering from psychological trauma need assistance in reconstructing their lives in order to improve their mental welfare, give them hope, and greater resilience. Failure to initiate forcibly displaced people with both forms of assistance



© Maria Dolores, known as Lola, a refugee who helped to develop an adult literacy course with the support of JRS. Photo taken from the video project "Blessed migration: stories of refuge" by Fernando Valencia and Jonatan Rosas.

Ecuador

can make integration into their new communities infinitely more difficult, and in many cases impossible.

In Ecuador's capital city Quito, and in the rest of the locations where JRS Ecuador has a presence, our work consists of four fundamental elements: comprehensive assistance; comprehensive social inclusion; political assistance, and social and community awareness—the latter aids us in making host communities better aware of the challenges with which forcibly displaced people face through processes of information, communication, and education.

Integration means, above all, social inclusion. In neighbourhoods in Quito, JRS has created projects to increase awareness of the necessity of human migration, and what it means to be a person in need of international or national protection. Moreover, the projects also promote mutual understanding and respect, because integration requires dialogue from both asylum seekers/refugees and their host communities.

Ecuador currently hosts Colombians, Haitians, Venezuelans, and a small community of Cubans. Colombians by far make up the largest population (although recently the country is seeing an influx of Venezuelan migrants) and the majority hail from rural areas of their country. In Colombia, they were poor but they had land. Now, their agricultural skills are obsolete in the urban Ecuadorian context, and many Colombians are unable to find substantive work—so they work in the streets, or in low-wage jobs where they are often exploited.

Although Ecuador is a border country, discrimination against displaced people from neighbouring countries is all

too common. Because many Colombians, as well as Haitians, have Afro roots, they are subject to racism and stereotypes: women are seen as prostitutes and men as thieves. Haitians also suffer the double blow of being Francophone people in a Spanish speaking country. Like other parts of the urbanized world, many forcibly displaced people live in proximity to locals who are equally impoverished, so they also become competitors for low-paying jobs.

For the past nine years, JRS Ecuador has been running a citizenship and human rights program that brings together nearly 80 male and female leaders of refugee organizations throughout the country. The objective of the program is to create opportunities for greater integration for forcibly displaced people. JRS Ecuador has developed training modules that explore human rights, citizenship, migration, and interculturality. Many forcibly displaced people participate in the program by working as advocates for their communities: they offer assistance with the asylum-seeking process, literacy and life skills classes, etc.

JRS Ecuador also provides organizational reinforcement and support for approximately 40 organizations, located in various areas in Ecuador. Asylum seekers and refugees of various ages, races, and cultural backgrounds work with us in this capacity, which keeps us abreast of the success of our projects, and informs us where we need to improve. Together we have cultivated long-lasting and trusting relationships, by providing everyday monitoring and support during the complex process of integration.

Promoting diversity is key in strengthening intercultural relationships based on respect

and constructive dialogue. It is impossible to offer sustained assistance—legal, psychosocial, or life-skills training—without first establishing the significance of the refugees in their new communities. All of us, women and men from different cultural backgrounds, must coexist. At JRS, we value the distinct stories of forcibly displaced people; how each has left their countries of origin, often pursued by violence, and leaving behind all that is familiar.

The plight of forcibly displaced people is frequently depicted as a lost cause. But when we put our hearts into our work with them, we are aware of the strength and hope of our asylum-seeking and refugee brothers and sisters. We witness their strength and autonomy. All is not lost. ●

“Promoting diversity is key in strengthening intercultural relationships based on respect and constructive dialogue.”

Building communities for Canadians and newcomers

Norbert Piché, Country Director &
Mario Brisson SJ, Head of Sponsorship Program

Following the call in 1980 of Pedro Arrupe SJ, then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, to assist the Vietnamese boat people, the Jesuits of French Canada started to sponsor refugees. Canada had instituted the private sponsorship of refugees in 1979. Since then, the Jesuits' sponsorship program has supported thousands of forcibly displaced people from many parts of the world.

The program is relatively simple: the first component is for residents of Québec who wish to bring family members to Canada, but do not qualify financially under the government criteria, to be sponsors: they come to us, and we act as guarantors. We do all the administrative work of filling out the government forms and make sure the newcomers, as they prefer to be called, have all the necessary documentation. Once the application is approved, there is a waiting period that is usually between two to five years before the newcomers can arrive.

The second component is for groups, usually parishes, who wish to sponsor a family of newcomers. They have the financial means to be sponsors, and therefore do not require us as guarantors; however, they do depend on us for our administrative expertise.

Upon arrival of the newcomers, we assist the sponsors (both family members or groups) in the integration process. This means meeting them at the airport; helping them with more administrative work (there are many forms to fill out once the newcomers arrive, such as

application forms for their health cards, social insurance numbers, etc.); accompanying them during their transition to a new culture and language; helping those who suffer from psychological trauma; supporting them in their job search; supporting them financially with their basic needs; and orienting them to their new city—with the public transportation system, libraries, recreation centres, schools, etc.

In 2016, Canada welcomed over 45,000 refugees, primarily from Syria, numbers not seen since the Vietnamese and Bosnian crises. We are experiencing something quite exceptional, and listening to both the newcomers and sponsors is essential in addressing everyone's needs. What is certain is the importance of being present to the people whom we welcome, so that we better understand what they feel and experience at the level of their personnel development.

Realizing that the sponsors could not respond to the growing numbers and needs of the newcomers, we put in place a special, holistic project that allows us to look at all the different aspects of the newcomer—psychosocial, physical, intellectual, and spiritual.

Supported by a group of 25 experienced volunteers and two employees, the project targets three important aspects of the newcomer's life in Canada: accompaniment in their psychosocial and spiritual needs, their integration into community life, and their acquisition of



📷 Syrian refugees gather for a group learning session (top photo by Kameel Jbil) and legal advice (bottom photo by Tamam Nassar/JRS) offered by JRS.

Canada

the French language. We try to accomplish this, as much as possible, in the communities where the newcomers live.

In the psychosocial and spiritual section, we offer support to individuals and families who are mourning both the loss of relatives, friends, their livelihood, their country, etc., and their challenges in the resettlement process. To accomplish this, we offer them different activities such as home visits, introductory sessions on life in Canada, and workshops on the hardships one may encounter when forced to make the transition to a new home.

Home visits allow the newcomers to express their feelings: to voice their suffering, fears, stress, anxiety, anger, joy, gratitude, etc. This allows us to better respond to their needs by accompanying them to a medical clinic or to their children's schools. We also accompany them in follow-ups for all applications, research on professional training needs, professional equivalency, or adult education. Most importantly, the visits cultivate a relationship of confidence with the newcomers. In fact, they have requested our help in overcoming family problems.

It is also through home visits that we discovered the parents' needs for assistance with their children's homework and to better understand the educational system. An essential element of these visits is the opportunity to socialize with the entire family. Here are some of the words from the parents and the children:

"I cannot find the words to express my feelings when he stayed until 11 p.m. to help my son with an exam the following day."

– Mother of two teenagers

"In the beginning, I was a bit afraid because of the colour of her skin, but now I don't want her to go back to her country."

– An eight-year-old girl speaking about an African volunteer who tutored her.

"He helped me build confidence in myself."

– A 16-year-old

Our information sessions have introduced newcomers to Canadian culture, specifically in Québec. They find out about affordable, available resources that they can use, and if there is something we cannot provide, we also inform them about other organizations with whom we collaborate.

In partnership with a school division, we have developed French conversational classes run by a teacher and/or volunteer. Being less formal, these classes allow the newcomers to express themselves in the context of everyday life. During these classes, other volunteers look after the children.

A vital part of our programs is a workshop on the hardships of leaving their home and arriving in a new society. This is a chance for the newcomers to have a voice and a space to express themselves freely about their feelings. Too often, those feelings are never dealt with because of the rush to integrate (learning the language, finding a job, etc.). In these workshops, they are given time and much needed space.

During these days of sharing, both young adults and their parents: meditate, recount stories, sing, play, and eat. They fully experience their new life together. ●

"In 2016, Canada welcomed over 45,000 refugees, primarily from Syria, numbers not seen since the Vietnamese and Bosnian crises."



📷 Volunteer looking after children while parents are attending a French conversation group. [Tamam Nassar/JRS]



View of Amman, from a former school that JRS established for refugees from Iraq. [Photo Don Doll SJ]

Accompanying Refugees in Amman

Cedric Prakash, Regional Advocacy & Communications Officer

With contributions from:

Elizabeth Woods, Project Director of Urban Refugee Support,
Esraa Janajreh & Bushara Nalu, members of JRS Home Visit Team

Amman, the capital of Jordan, is widely regarded as one of the most liberal cities in the Arab world. It is home to little over four million of Jordan's 9.5 million people. Since 1948, Jordan has welcomed refugees from Palestine, Kuwait, Iraq and more recently from Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and other war-torn parts of Africa. Jordan hosts a population of 2,860,669 forcibly displaced people, and the majority reside in Amman.

Joseph Ismael* from Sudan is one of thousands of refugees who lives in Amman. Like so many forcibly displaced people, he fled his country for the apparent safety, security, and opportunities offered by a major city. Joseph

is in the prime of his youth: he wants a better life and a better future; however, each day he is confronted with the realities and challenges of being a refugee.

The Jordanian government, UN agencies such as UNHCR and UNWRA, and other international organisations are certainly assisting the refugees. However, the situation for many of them remains uncertain. There is a daily struggle on several fronts: lack of appropriate housing (the cost of rent for even small rooms is inflated); unemployment; lack of medical care; and the range of social problems that refugees typically face in most foreign countries—i.e. exclusion by the locals and exploitation.

Joseph once rented a one-room apartment at an exorbitant fee, even though the bathroom and toilet were located outside and there was no heating. He managed to find work at a construction site, carrying materials and cleaning up, but since he suffers from a kidney ailment, the hard work took its toll on his health. When he went to the construction manager to resign, he was beaten so badly his nose was broken.

Jesuit Refugee Service began work in Jordan in 2008. Ever since, it has provided the refugees with a variety of services that include: tertiary and higher education programmes; home visits that enable JRS teams to meet with the refugees and assess their needs (to

Jordan

determine how best to support to them); and psychosocial support that is given to those who are unable to leave their homes to access services.

As an organization, JRS Jordan is committed to serving, accompanying, and advocating for all refugees irrespective of their nationality. This is not the case of most organizations in Amman—though some purport they serve all.

JRS therefore faces many challenges, and among them are the constant influx of refugees into Amman, many of whom have left the official camps because of poor conditions. There is also gross unemployment among the refugees, and work permits have been issued only to Syrians in certain sectors. Since the work permits are not available to other nationalities, many refugees work illegally and experience great exploitation. Amman is an expensive city and most of the refugees can hardly afford the steep rents; there are several other expenses refugees need to meet such as medical care, education, transportation, and food.

Unfortunately, aid for refugees in Amman is not based on need but on nationality, so various organizations are therefore cautious when offering services. This is particularly challenging in the case of medical assistance. Many refugees have medical needs including check-ups, medication, surgery, or ongoing support for chronic conditions; certain nationalities cannot be given a referral because there is practically no one who will address their health concerns, which makes them extremely vulnerable.

Those interested in higher education have practically no opportunities due to a lack of programs—although there are some which cater to Syrian refugees. JRS has been trying

to fill this gap as much as possible by providing a variety of classes that do not discriminate against Amman's varied refugee population. Resettlement is only an option for a small portion of the refugees in Jordan, and fewer countries are accepting refugees of all nationalities.

Elizabeth Woods, Project Director of Urban Refugee Support of JRS Jordan, puts it succinctly:

“Urban refugees in Amman face a multitude of issues stemming from how aid is not based on need but on nationality, thus some groups are extremely vulnerable when the situation is already difficult for all.”

This is a sentiment that is unequivocally shared by Insherah Mousa, the JRS Country Director, and the other members of the JRS Jordan team as well.

JRS's projects offer opportunities that are inclusive, giving those on the margins greater access to multiple types of assistance. Joseph received medical assistance for his kidney ailment after a home visit team met him and aided in getting him medical treatment. He still is not cured and remains unemployed. But he spends most of his time at the JRS Centre, where he is studying English. Joseph is quick to offer JRS his gratitude. “As soon as I learned about JRS, I registered with them,” he tells me. “I am happy about this decision, because other organizations were unable to offer me help with my situation before that. Now I have both assistance and community.”

Amman is Jordan's principal city of commerce and industry: it is a city that offers many opportunities. But for Joseph Ismael, and other refugees like him, opportunities are often an elusive element of rebuilding lives disrupted by conflict and/or poverty. ●

*Name has been changed



Photo of Joseph Ismael taken by a team member during a home visit. (Amina Hroub/JRS)

“JRS's projects offer opportunities that are inclusive, giving those on the margins greater access to multiple types of assistance.”

Walking miles in their shoes

Jill Drzewiecki, International Campaign and Philanthropy Officer

West Africans. Rohingyas. Syrians. No matter how reviled refugees may feel, or how hostile their reception may appear from some factions in the nations where they land, a recent study conducted by the Tent Foundation reveals a far more humane reaction.

When asked about the international public perception of refugees, 89 per cent of all participants expressed concern for their wellbeing, due to the harsh circumstances they face. Only one in ten participants expressed no concern.

Despite a negative and pervasive narrative about refugees in the media, this study tells a different story. At Jesuit Refugee Service, we are aware of this truth. It is part of the fabric of JRS and its supporters, and the driving force behind our determination to translate compassion for refugees into action. Here is an example:

Beppie Peters is a 67-year-old retired primary school teacher, mother, and grandmother who hails from the Netherlands. Mayassa is a 17-year-old Syrian refugee living in Lebanon. The two have never met, yet they are intrinsically bound.

This year, Beppie decided to take part in the international four-day charity walk in her hometown Nijmegen to raise funds for the Frans van der Lugt Centre, a JRS educational and social centre named after fellow Dutchman Frans van der Lugt SJ, who lived for decades in war-torn Syria. Fr Frans offered refuge to Christian and Muslim families alike, and shared in

their suffering, until he was murdered by a masked gunman. The eponymous centre, located in the urban Bourj Hammoud area of Beirut, Lebanon, provides daily education to more than 600 Syrian refugee children and adults, primarily women, and works with needy refugee families in their homes.

Mayassa and her family left their country due to the war and ended up in Beirut. With few resources and distance from her once close-knit family, she became depressed. But her life took a turn when she enrolled in the centre to receive tutoring and homework support. For young people uprooted by war, education can reassure them that life can, and will, go on. Mayassa wants to become a psychiatric nurse; the centre has revived her drive and optimism.

A year ago, Beppie suffered a mild heart attack and couldn't attend the walk. This year her perseverance, and support of family and friends, allowed her to complete the tough, four-day trek. She completed 120 kilometres and raised 3.004 Euro. Clicking a 'donate' button or organising a small charity event can feel insignificant and mechanical. But donations of this kind make a tangible difference to real people like Mayassa.

Beppie transformed her concern into a four-day journey, and an eventual gift to JRS. We thank her and her supporters. With USD 86.00 (75 Euro) to JRS, for instance, you enable a young student like Mayassa to receive educational support for one month. ●



📷 Beppie Peters, who raised 3.004 Euro for Syrian refugees in Beirut through a charity walk. [Annemieke Cuijpers]

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Jesuit Refugee Service
Borgo Santo Spirito, 4
00193 Rome—Italy

Thank you

Do you have a story about sharing talent, time or treasure with JRS? If so, we would love to hear it. Please contact: jill.drzewiecki@jrs.net

Lampedusa: Concerts for Refugees

Lampedusa: Concerts for Refugees mounted a successful two week, eight-city tour, beginning in Seattle, on 3 October and ending in Dallas, 15 October. Lampedusa, designed to spotlight the global refugee crisis, was produced by Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, in partnership with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The tour raised awareness and money to support expanded educational opportunities for forcibly displaced people through JRS's Global Education Initiative (GEI).

This year's tour featured a revolving cast of singer-songwriters, performing all acoustic shows and featured Joan Baez, Brandi Carlile, Lila Downs, Steve Earle, Patty Griffin, Emmylou Harris, Dave Matthews, Buddy Miller, Alynda Segarra, The Mastersons, James McMurtry, David Pulkingham, Lucinda Williams, with guest appearances by Iraqi oud player, Rahim AlHaj, Justin Townes Earle, Aaron Lee Tasjan, and the Grateful Dead's Bob Weir. Each of the concerts showcased the artists together on stage, collaborating musically and exchanging stories, often relating their songs to the subject of forcibly displaced people.

Sarah Carroll
JRS USA Director of Communications

To donate to the Global Education Initiative (GEI), please go to: <https://www.jrsusa.org/donate>



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