

Advocacy in Jesuit Refugee Service



JRS

accompany • serve • advocate



Cover photo:

Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, 2010 (JRS Nepal)

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Peter Balleis SJ

Editors:

Amaya Valcárcel
Danielle Vella

Designer:

Eleonora Pucci



The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation established in 1980 by Pedro Arrupe SJ. Working in 60 countries worldwide, its mission is to accompany, serve and defend the cause of forcibly displaced people.

Jesuit Refugee Service

Borgo Santo Spirito 4,
00193 Rome, Italy
Tel: + 39 06 689 77 465
Fax: + 39 06 68977461
international.advocacy@jrs.net
www.jrs.net

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Advocacy in Jesuit Refugee Service

In JRS, advocacy involves empowering forcibly displaced people to claim the rights to which they are entitled, and assisting them to exercise those rights. This involves promoting the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced persons; lobbying for governmental and institutional action to address root causes of forced displacement; and working towards sustainable and durable solutions. Advocacy also includes activities to enhance public perception of refugees and forcibly displaced persons, and their integration.

Advocacy is an integral part of the JRS mission and of our daily activities around the world. Addressing the root causes of human displacement and striving to change unjust policies are fundamental to the JRS mandate. JRS advocacy is characterised by the following key principles:

- It is rooted in proximity to refugees;
- It flows from accompaniment and service and is linked to JRS projects;
- It is based on Jesuit values, inspired by Ignatian spirituality;
- It is built on solid research.

JRS advocacy draws on the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention relating to the status of refugees, widely acknowledged to be the cornerstone of refugee protection. However, to guide its advocacy and service, JRS uses a wider definition of 'refugee' than that of the Convention. In a 1992 document entitled *Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity*, the Catholic Church expanded its understanding of the term "refugee" to include "de facto refugees", encompassing victims of armed conflicts, erroneous economic policy or natural disasters, as well as internally displaced people (IDPs).

JRS advocacy builds upon synergies among forcibly displaced people: JRS team workers and others who serve refugees; academics; human rights advocates; the public who support our work; and, in some instances, government and UN officials. We share the common hope that all those who have been forced to flee may regain the opportunity to live in freedom and dignity.

JRS carries out advocacy by:

- Seeking opportunities to advocate for those whose needs are forgotten by others;
- Addressing both the immediate needs as well as longer-term policy objectives of specific groups of refugees and other forcibly displaced people;
- Being close to the people concerned, and supporting their hopes and aspirations;
- Giving people the opportunity to tell their stories;
- Creating spaces for dialogue between the centres of power and those who want to bring about positive change;





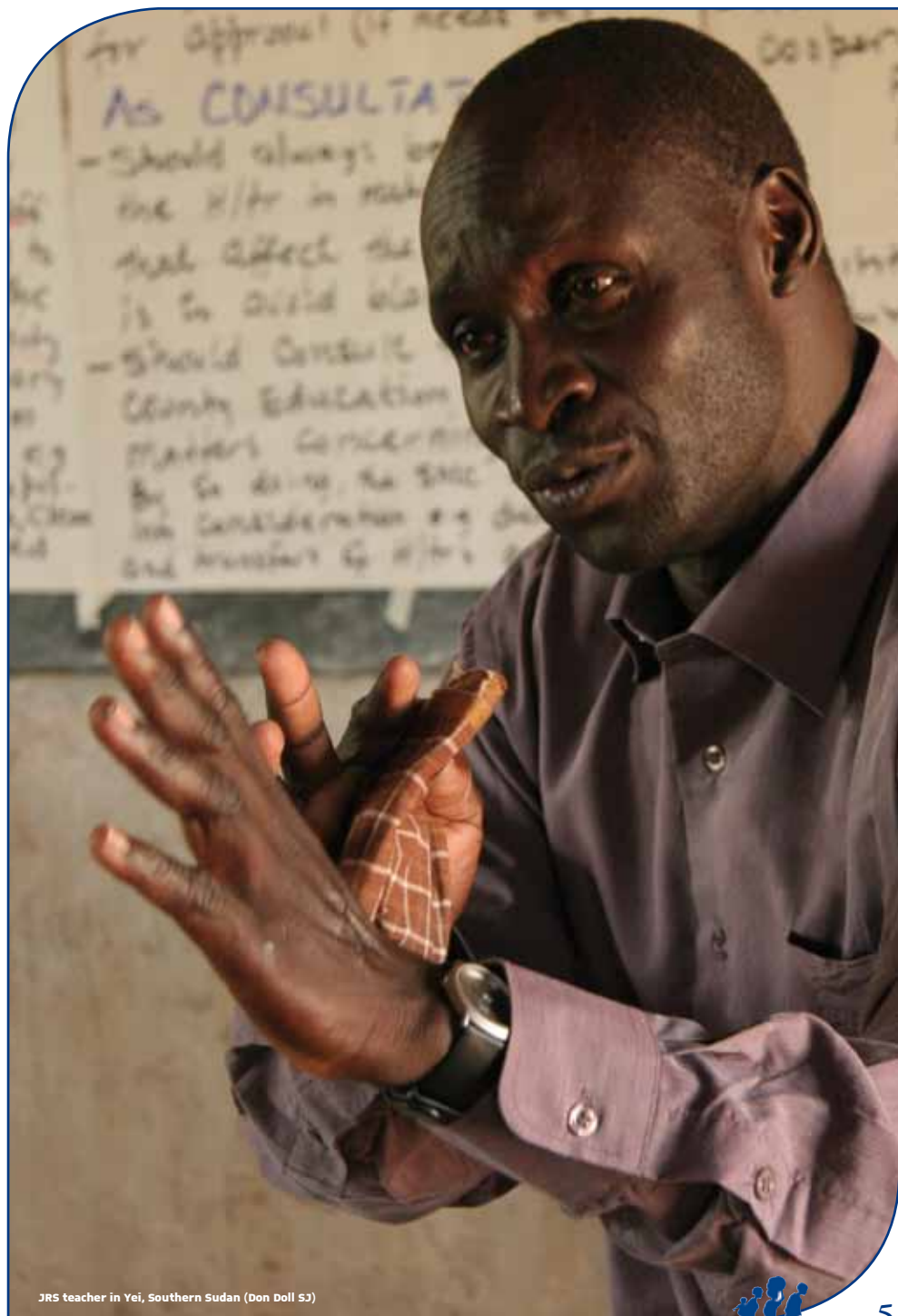
JRS worker Pablo Funes with a friend in Uvira, DRC (Don Doll SJ)

- Tailoring our approach to make it appropriate to local conditions, reflecting local needs, resources and opportunities; and
- Prioritising our efforts on the basis of the value that JRS can give to supplement the work of others.

JRS advocacy takes place on many levels. In the **field**, JRS staff frequently advocate on behalf of individual refugees who need help to protect their rights and dignity or to meet their basic needs. Such person-to-person advocacy is often carried out by project staff who observe and respond to refugee needs in the course of their daily work. For example, JRS Ukraine learned that asylum seekers and refugees could not access basic healthcare. The response of JRS was to inform the Ukrainian authorities and hospital administrators about existing access to healthcare laws, and to advocate for their implementation.

Accompaniment becomes advocacy when an appeal is made by a JRS staff member, on behalf of a refugee, to an outside party that can provide help. Some examples: helping a refugee to enroll in a camp programme from which he/she has been mistakenly excluded; helping a refugee with a disability to access specialised care; arranging legal representation for a refugee in trouble. Observing a wide pattern of needs can lead to field advocacy on behalf of certain categories of refugees as, for example, when JRS staff approach camp managers, local government officials or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to ask for changes in policy or practices to better protect vulnerable people.





JRS teacher in Yei, Southern Sudan (Don Doll SJ)





Displaced child coming back
from school near Trincomalee,
Sri Lanka (Peter Balleis SJ)



Apart from being a spontaneous part of the daily work of JRS staff, advocacy for individuals is also a structured aspect of many JRS projects, especially in urban areas, where lawyers are engaged in casework related to asylum applications and other issues.

JRS advocacy also takes place a **country** level: when changes in national law or policy affecting refugees or IDPs are called for; when national resources could be directed towards better meeting refugee needs; to promote integration and combat xenophobia.

Since refugees and the political, social and economic issues relating to them cross national boundaries, JRS can be organised on a **regional** basis. Our advocacy has a significant regional component, with advocacy staff at this level charged with monitoring the situation of refugees and IDPs in the region, collecting information on developments, and helping to draft organisational positions on relevant issues. Advocacy personnel also work with communications staff to inform national offices of developments that could provide opportunities for advocacy.

Finally, JRS advocates on an **international** level. Our offices in Rome, Geneva, Brussels, Nairobi and Washington present the concerns of the JRS network to governments and institutions that can improve conditions affecting refugees, and put pressure on other actors to do so as well. These offices work closely with the JRS regional advocacy officers on areas of broad concern, such as education, detention and urban refugees.

At every level, JRS advocacy is linked to, and dependent upon, the knowledge and understanding derived from our close relationship to the refugees themselves. The ability to mobilise the entire network to bring the voice of refugees to those who are in a position to effect positive change gives JRS advocacy its integrity – and is what makes it so effective.

I think that the Christian faith is very strong on justice for the poor. If you are helping people who have been injured by landmines, justice demands that you also advocate that the cause of the suffering be stopped; that you ban landmines and call producers to account. Mercy requires that we serve the poor, the sick and the ignorant. Some people think children are ignorant, but I think ignorant people are those who make weapons and don't know, or block from their minds, the consequences of what they are making money from. Faith-inspired organisations can help align the interests of the people with the political interests of the leaders.

Denise Coghlán RSM, JRS Cambodia Director

The complementary nature of our programmatic and advocacy response is illustrated by the way in which the following issues of concern are highlighted throughout the JRS organisation.





Education

Access to quality education for all children, especially girls

JRS considers access to education to be both a human right and a means to build peace and development. Education plays a critical role in sustaining the daily lives of many forcibly displaced people. JRS considers education to be one of the four fundamental pillars of humanitarian assistance, along with food, healthcare, and shelter. Like healthcare, education has a preventive dimension and the potential to pay future dividends.

JRS places the highest priority on ensuring a better future for refugees by investing heavily in education and training. Worldwide, JRS provides access to primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational education to approximately 280,000 children, young people and adults each year. We further advocate that all displaced children be provided with access to quality education. Obstacles to quality education include: wrongful government policies that deny access to good schools, the lack of documentation, or other situations such as the issue witnessed by JRS in Chad, where refugee teachers find that their qualifications are not recognised by the government, and only receive salaries on an irregular basis.

In Southern Sudan, JRS advocacy efforts place special emphasis on empowering girls to access primary and secondary education as a basic minimum right. In many Southern Sudanese communities, where the early marriage of girls is a widely accepted cultural practice, JRS has worked successfully with families to encourage them to enrol and to keep their girls in primary and secondary school.



JRS Malawi provides quality education to primary and secondary school students in Dzaleka refugee camp. Having achieved a 2010 pass rate that was higher than that of the surrounding local government schools, JRS Malawi enlarged their secondary school facilities, hoping to provide education for more students in 2011. JRS Malawi is also encouraging community integration by providing places in their school for local Malawian children as well as refugees.

In Addis Ababa, JRS operates a refugee community centre, which serves as a place where children can freely express themselves through play, song, dance and basic education. Older children and adults can also access supplementary education through computer classes and free internet facilities that connect them to the outside world. In July 2010, eight refugees from Southern Sudan graduated with high honours from the Addis Ababa University. They expressed their gratitude to JRS for its support, saying: "The war took away our homes, but with the education we received, we feel challenged to return to our homeland and rebuild our country."

JRS Indonesia promotes *Living Values Education* among teachers, school directors and the department of education in formerly conflict-displaced communities in South Aceh. The aim is to improve the quality of education of children at risk by using a practical methodology and activities based on experiential values. Educators are asked to think about their values, to use their creativity to incorporate values into their curriculum in a practical way, and to create a values-based atmosphere. This work includes activities about peace, reconciliation, love, cooperation, happiness, honesty, humility, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance, freedom and unity.



Skills training for IDP women in Sri Lanka (Don Doll SJ)




Tailoring skills for Southern Sudanese women in Rhino camp, Uganda (Don Doll SJ)



Student in Tamilnadu, India (Don Doll SJ)





Colombian
refugees
in Venezuela
(JRS International)

Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Basic rights for the most vulnerable

In recent years, the number of IDPs increased significantly, reaching an estimated total of 26 million worldwide in 2010. JRS works with IDPs in Southern Sudan, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad, Central African Republic, Colombia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste, providing education, psychosocial support, peace-building, pastoral accompaniment, training in modern agricultural techniques, and mediation in land disputes and other areas of conflict. Through its presence in IDP camps, JRS aims to guarantee access to food, shelter, medical aid and education, with special attention paid to the basic needs of the most vulnerable. We also train community leaders to advocate for IDP needs in order to ensure their safety in places of return.

JRS Zimbabwe focuses on keeping internally displaced children in school by offering assistance with the costs and supplies associated with education, such as uniforms and books. A 13-year-old beneficiary, Peter Sibekwazi (pseudonym), says: "Without you I would have dropped out of school."

In North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), JRS is present in IDP settlements, accompanying and providing services to the most vulnerable. Through adult literacy and non-formal education programmes, we aim to develop the skills, such as tailoring and basket-making, of the most marginalised people. JRS also provides education support to local schools near the camps.



Based on direct testimonies, JRS USA published a document that raised the profile of the needs of Colombian IDPs, illustrating the need for placing more emphasis on humanitarian funding in Colombia and taking money out of the military budget support. As a result of coalition advocacy in which JRS USA engaged, the US decreased the amount of funding it gave to the Colombian military by nearly 30%, increasing the funding to humanitarian efforts by 25%.

Internationally, JRS advocates have been active in promoting a more vigorous global response to emergencies that result in internal displacement, through monitoring the “cluster approach” to assistance for IDPs, and by supporting UNHCR engagement in this crucial area.



Camp for IDPs in Sri Lanka (Don Doll SJ)





Food at school in Haiti, (Peter Balleis SJ)

Food security

Promoting opportunities for refugees and IDPs to earn their livelihood

Refugees and IDPs are frequently forced to flee without the basics of life. Even when they are provided with a degree of protection in a country of asylum, they may be denied freedom of movement and the legal right to work, be confined to refugee camps where they are prevented from cultivating their own food, and lack access to trading markets. Under these conditions, refugees are forced to depend on the host country and international community to meet their basic needs including, most fundamentally, food. Food aid is often inadequate either in quantity or in nutritional value, leading to serious physical harm and negative social consequences.

The refugee food pipeline is often precarious, depending on the sufficiency and timing of aid from a few donor nations that respond to urgent appeals. Frequently, new crises compete for attention with ongoing needs. An emerging issue is access to food in urban areas, where aid may not be available, or where a lack of legal status or documentation may lead refugees and asylum seekers to avoid seeking assistance for fear of exposing their presence to the authorities.

JRS South Africa has an office in Makhado, a town close to the border of South Africa and Zimbabwe. This office provides food and hygiene packages of World Health Organisation (WHO) standards to those who visit the office, on a no-questions-asked basis. This office fed approximately 12,000 beneficiaries in 2010 – many of whom



were undocumented, vulnerable Zimbabweans. Many visitors arrive hungry and tired, without having slept or washed in days. The Makhado office is in the process of building a shower station to provide visitors with a space to clean up and restore this aspect of their personal dignity.

Burundians who repatriate from the Tanzania camps are more vulnerable than those who decided to stay in Burundi during the war. In an overpopulated country where more than 85% of the people rely on land for cultivation, JRS Burundi runs a food security programme in the east. Our aim in this programme, underway since 2007, is to promote self-sufficiency and durable solutions for returnees through accompaniment, workshops and ongoing formation.

Refugees and IDPs account for only a small proportion of the one hundred million people today receiving international food assistance. However, they are critically disadvantaged by the very fact of their displacement and by legal and physical restrictions that often make it impossible for them to meet their food needs. This is why access to food is a key advocacy area of JRS. We work to promote food security in Africa, in other places where refugee food aid may be inadequate, in new emergencies or in protracted refugee situations.

JRS advocacy urges:

- donors to give priority to World Food Programme (WFP) appeals for refugee- and IDP-related needs;
- host governments to promote opportunities for refugees to earn their livelihood so that they may either produce or purchase food;
- governments, UNHCR and WFP not to use cuts in food rations as a means of coercing the repatriation of refugees or the relocation of internally displaced populations.

When JRS offices in Rome, Geneva, Washington and other international centres learn about specific food shortfalls from JRS regional offices, our advocacy staff meet representatives of governments and UN agencies, such as UNHCR and WFP, to urge them to ensure that these needs are recognised and addressed.

In many countries, such as Central African Republic, food security is inadequate for both the local population and refugees. Through dialogue and supplying information to refugee and host communities, JRS works to reduce tensions between the two, and to achieve a more equitable aid response.



Urban refugees

A positive approach empowers urban refugees to use their energy and talents to benefit host communities

Today, the majority of the world's refugees live in urban settings. Urban refugees share all the challenges of the urban poor, and often face additional barriers due to their uncertain legal status and lack of documentation. They constantly face protection risks, among them detention, deportation, and labour and sexual exploitation. When viewed as a drain on scarce resources, urban refugees may become the target of xenophobia, and face harassment from local authorities and exploitation by employers.

In the JRS regions of Southern and Eastern Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East, JRS service and advocacy combine to address some of the urgent problems facing urban refugees. JRS urges governments and civil society groups worldwide to welcome refugees and other forcibly displaced people in urban areas. We believe that adopting a positive and supportive approach to the presence of refugees in urban areas not only promotes their wellbeing but empowers them to use their skills to benefit their host communities.

On a broader level, JRS provides input to the drafting processes shaping international policies, such as the UNCHR *Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas* (September 2009), and works to see that the principles articulated in such documents and in international human rights law are applied to the treatment of all refugees, including those who live in non-camp settings.



Since 2007, JRS Europe has researched the situation of forced migrants in Europe who live in destitution, and who reside for the most part in urban areas. Due to their uncertain legal status, destitute forced migrants have little or no access to healthcare, reliable accommodation or formal employment. JRS Europe advocates with European Union (EU) policymakers, through one-on-one meetings and at large events, calling for laws and policies that would alleviate the destitution of forced migrants across Europe.

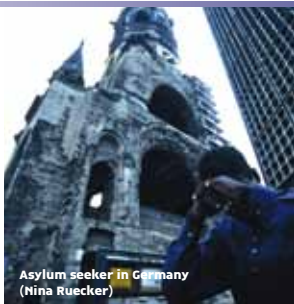
In 2010, JRS South Africa's urban refugees project helped a chronically ill client from Burundi to receive life-saving dialysis treatment, after state hospitals in Pretoria refused to treat her. Through JRS partnership with a legal aid organisation, Jaqui's (pseudonym) case has been brought to court and her right to access medical assistance is being defended.

In Nairobi, JRS is part of the urban refugee protection network, which serves as a channel to raise awareness about the plight of urban refugees, based on their experiences, challenges and protection needs in Kenya. JRS works closely with partner agencies in referring urban refugees for medical and legal assistance. In the urban project in Kampala, JRS gives a voice to asylum seekers and refugees by working with UNHCR and the Refugee Law Project to advocate for their legal protection, and through referrals to other NGOs such as the African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV). By teaching urban refugees English, JRS enables them to communicate their needs. Through skills-training (for example, hairdressing, computer literacy, catering, driving and soap-making), JRS encourages self-sufficiency.

JRS Cambodia works with a growing number of urban refugees and asylum seekers. The office provides small loans so that refugees and asylum seekers can start businesses. Most of those on the loan scheme have been able to establish street-food ventures, often working together with members of their communities. The scheme has helped some to access income-generating opportunities, particularly as paid employment is extremely difficult to find.



Asylum seeker
in Centro Astalli, JRS Italy



Asylum seeker in Germany
(Nina Ruecker)



Returnees in
Luanda,
Angola (Xavier
Garcia)





Detention

Promoting alternatives, especially for children

Detention of people in need of protection remains a pressing concern for JRS worldwide, particularly in the regions of Europe, the USA, Southern Africa and Asia Pacific. Asylum seekers, undocumented migrants and refugees are taken into detention even if they have committed no crime and pose no danger to the community. Immigration detention is inflicted upon women with young children, unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable individuals, such as the elderly and people with disabilities. Migrants and refugees are often detained in appalling conditions for extended periods without recourse to legal assistance.

Depending on needs, circumstances and access, JRS provides pastoral, medical, psychosocial and legal services in immigration detention centres, with special attention given to the most vulnerable. JRS monitors the situation of detainees and lobbies international organisations, such as UNHCR, to attend to their needs and to speed up the refugee status determination and resettlement of sensitive and urgent cases.

JRS advocates for governmental compliance with international human rights laws relating to freedom of movement and detention standards, and for the use of humane alternatives to immigration detention. In Australia, for example, JRS is calling for an end to the use of Christmas Island as a reception and processing centre, and for the transfer of detainees held there to the mainland, where better detention conditions are available. In 2005, JRS was instrumental in setting up the *International Coalition on Detention of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants*.




In 2010, JRS Europe published an in-depth study on the vulnerability of those in detention based on interviews with 685 individuals detained in 21 European countries. The study reveals that detainees are likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia, loss of appetite and deterioration to their wellbeing. JRS Europe has disseminated this study to politicians and policymakers in the EU, in order to advocate for the adoption of new legal standards that would reduce the use of detention, and provide better protection for those who are detained.

JRS Germany has established a Legal Aid Fund to assist detained individuals with their asylum and/or immigration cases. In 2009, the fund paid legal assistance for 138 detainees; 86% were subsequently released from detention.

JRS USA chaplaincy programmes provide pastoral and religious assistance to meet the needs of non-citizens detained in three US federal detention centres and a Los Angeles County detention centre. JRS USA led efforts to ensure appropriate pastoral care is provided to detained immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers during their incarceration in federal detention centres. Since the use of immigration detention has more than tripled over the past 10 years, three quarters of those detained are now held in contract facilities or county jails where they do not have access to federal chaplaincy programs. Our research and advocacy highlighted an inequitable system in which pastoral and religious services varied widely from facility to facility. Through advocacy directed at the US Congress and the US Department of Homeland Security, JRS USA preserved both the funding for religious services and access to appropriate pastoral care and raised the need for consistent and equitable access for immigrants detained in over 200 private detention facilities.

JRS Indonesia accompanies detainees in one immigration detention centre, giving psychosocial support and organising sport activities. The team has held discussions with the head of the centre about how to improve the detainees' living conditions. JRS promotes the release of vulnerable people, including women and children, and provides housing and food for asylum seekers living in the community.





Angolan
refugees
during a
demonstration
in Osire,
Namibia
(Lolín
Menéndez
RSCJ)

Protection

Defending the right not to be returned to persecution or worse

JRS defends the basic human right of refugees, uprooted or stateless people not to be returned involuntarily to a country where they could face persecution. Longer term, the organisation helps refugees find appropriate and durable solutions, which may involve voluntary repatriation, integration in countries of asylum, or resettlement in third countries.

JRS advocates on behalf of those refugees and forced migrants whose precarious legal status offers only conditional or temporary protection, and who face the threat of deportation. We call on governments to protect all those risking forced return until a fair determination of their status is concluded. We oppose the *refoulement* of those with refugee status and others clearly in need of international protection, and we document and decry those cases that occur, such as that of the Uighurs forcibly sent back to China from Cambodia in December 2009. We promote just asylum laws, access to fair processing of asylum claims, and the implementation of protective regimes such as that provided by the European Convention against Torture.

JRS also works to prevent and address the risks associated with statelessness through advocacy aimed at different levels of government, the UN and refugee communities. Such advocacy includes the identification and elimination of obstacles to the issuing of documentation such as birth certificates. In Papua New Guinea, for example, many refugee children do not have birth certificates, leading to problems with proof of identity and the risk of statelessness. Dominican-born children of Hai-



tian descent face the same problem, with the result that they are denied access to schools and other basic services.

JRS Germany supports other NGOs who take part in the monitoring of forced return operations in the main airports in Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Hamburg, following the death of several forcibly returned persons during such operations. Independent observers act as contact persons for families, and provide regular reports to a committee of state officials and NGOs that address problems arising as a result of forced returns.

JRS offers legal aid to asylum seekers in many countries in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. We also advocate for improved access to refugee status determination and swifter procedures. Both are essential to improve refugee protection and to allow refugees to find legal work and to access services, and thus to enjoy better living conditions.

In many countries of Latin America, the institutions responsible for refugee status determination are centralised, far from the areas where asylum seekers arrive and live. JRS in Venezuela, Panama and Ecuador provides legal advice in border areas. The teams follow up cases throughout the refugee status procedure. In Ecuador, in 2009 and 2010, JRS collaborated with UNHCR and the government in a process of mass regularisation of 27,000 Colombian refugees. JRS is now campaigning so that best practices which emerged from this process will be included in future procedures.

The Cambodian government has recently implemented its own domestic legislation governing refugee status determination. In line with the new standards JRS Cambodia ensures that rejected asylum seekers are given reasons for the negative decisions they receive, as well as an adequate opportunity to appeal.



Displaced child in Aceh,
Indonesia (Peter Balleis SJ)



Durable solutions

Supporting voluntary repatriation, integration in countries of asylum or resettlement in third countries

JRS advocates for durable solutions for all refugees, especially those who are in protracted situations. We promote voluntary repatriation, and oppose attempts to repatriate refugees prematurely or involuntarily. The resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees and the future of the Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu are examples of current situations of concern. In both areas, JRS international advocacy staff remain deeply engaged in monitoring progress towards achieving durable solutions. We are in dialogue with UNHCR and governments to ensure that refugee rights and aspirations are respected, and that their protection is not compromised.

The protracted situation of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal – a group that was neither permitted to return to Bhutan nor to integrate in Nepalese society – and consequent donor fatigue, forced the refugees to seek a durable solution. A resettlement process in third countries – the USA, Australia and Canada among others – started in 2007, jointly organised by UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). JRS Europe and JRS USA urged governments to provide resettlement opportunities for the Bhutanese. As a result of such advocacy, by the end of 2014, 93,000 of the 107,810 refugees will have resettled in third countries. JRS will continue to work with the remaining 15,000 exploring options for voluntary repatriation and integration into Nepalese society. Through the advocacy of JRS USA, the US government was also persuaded to provide funding for all Bhutanese refugee children to complete the last two years of their secondary education, an opportunity previously open to only a few.



In the early 90s, JRS helped Cambodian refugees to repatriate and reintegrate into society as they returned from camps in Thailand. Physical assistance was provided – providing shelter and material items – as well as support to foster strong relationships in the villages, so that people could work together and rebuild trust.



Camp for Bhutanese
refugees in eastern Nepal
(Peter Balleis SJ)





Landmine and cluster
munition survivors in
Battambang, Cambodia
(Amaya Valcarcel)



Landmines and cluster munitions

Aid to survivors and clearance of affected lands

JRS works at both grassroots and government levels to achieve its aims. An example is JRS' work on landmines where, together with other agencies, we have been instrumental in enabling the voices of survivors to be heard. The result: vital international treaties have been drawn up to address their concerns.

JRS plays an active role in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Cluster Munitions Coalition. A recent achievement of the latter is the Convention on Cluster Munitions, signed in Oslo in December 2008, which entered into force on 1 August 2010. This treaty bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions, and requires countries to clear affected areas within 10 years and to destroy stockpiles of the weapon within eight. Further, the Convention includes groundbreaking provisions for assistance to survivors and affected communities. Together with the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, it is one of the most significant international disarmament treaties.

Our interest in banning landmines began during work in refugee camps in the 80s, where we saw first hand the horrific consequences these weapons have on their victims. The Cambodia anti-landmine movement has been very influential in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. It began with a letter from four soldiers in the JRS Centre of the Dove, a vocational training project that provides landmine survivors with skills. The letter said: "Before we were soldiers who laid the mines that blew off the arms, legs and eyes of one another; now, we work together in the Centre of the Dove, and we beg the world to stop making mines, stop laying mines, begin clearing mines, and to work so that our communities and people with disabilities can live a full life once again." In 1997, one of these former soldiers, Tun Chunnareth, rode his wheelchair onto the stage in Oslo and received the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the campaign. He is working with JRS in Siam Reap, continuing his crusade against landmines. We have the Nobel Prize on display in our office. *Denise Coghlan RSM*



Left: Landmine survivor and activist Tun Chunnareth, visiting John Paul II together with Kike Figaredo SJ, 1997

Right: JRS Cambodia team at a UN Conference (JRS International)





Child soldiers



Rwanda, 1998 (Mark Raper 53)

Education to prevent child recruitment

Prevention of recruitment and reintegration of former child soldiers is high on the JRS agenda. There is a strong link between forced displacement and the forced recruitment of children by armed groups. Displaced children are an easy target for recruiters since they often lack adequate protection and education. JRS stresses the need for education as a means to decrease recruitment, and to give children a meaningful alternative to enlistment. JRS is part of the Coalition to stop the use of child soldiers, reporting on the use of children by armies or non-state actors.

In Chad, there is no clear plan of action to remove children from the army and other rebel groups. Through its education projects, JRS Chad works towards the rehabilitation of former child soldiers, seeking durable solutions for them. We promote the setting up of local committees whose role is awareness-raising in communities, so that everyone can play a role in the prevention of recruitment. Our advocacy hinges on open dialogue with the army and the Ministry of Social Affairs for a large disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme. JRS is also contributing to the drafting of an action plan to be submitted to the authorities by the NGO community.

Through its informal education programmes, JRS Colombia has sought, for more than a decade, to prevent the involvement of children in the country's armed conflict. By empowering minors, JRS helps them to become aware of their rights and to envisage alternatives for their future. In Venezuela, JRS promotes access to education for refugees and asylum seekers as a preventive measure against recruitment.



Displaced woman in Masisi, DRC
(Peter Balleis SJ)



Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

Upholding the right not to be abused, harassed, exploited or discriminated against

JRS strongly condemns the use of SGBV in any form and for whatever objective. We uphold human dignity, insisting on the right of security to each person, and freedom from sexual abuse, harassment and discrimination.

JRS is an implementing partner for UNHCR and other donors in projects aimed at preventing and responding to SGBV in situations of displacement. Such work includes legal and psychological services for SGBV survivors including refugees, IDPs and victims of human trafficking. Educational initiatives and awareness-raising about SGBV are held for men and women in detention facilities, reception centres and affected communities. An illustration of these efforts is JRS' participation in the *16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence*, a global campaign seeking to mobilise communities around the world to end all forms of gender violence.

JRS supports access to and sometimes provides healthcare – including mental healthcare, psychosocial support and safe havens – and legal aid for SGBV survivors, as well as preventative education. JRS also advocates for effective durable solutions for those at continued risk.





Bhutanese refugees during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, Goldhap camp, Nepal (JRS Nepal)

In Malta, JRS has employed the services of a psychologist and a nurse to offer treatment and support to victims of SCBV. JRS Malta holds group sessions with SCBV victims who are in detention, and publishes information leaflets to raise public awareness.

As part of its mandate to empower refugees through non-formal education, JRS Ethiopia raises awareness about obstetric fistula (or vaginal fistula), a medical condition primarily affecting women and girls in developing countries, which is caused by factors contributing to complications in childbirth, child marriage, female genital mutilation and gang rape. Women with fistulas are often rejected and abandoned by their communities. “We now see the extreme need to protect women from dehumanising acts and to stand up for their rights,” said a refugee. “We will make sure that we will protect women’s rights every day; protecting women means protecting society.”





Climate-induced displacement

Responding to the needs created by natural disasters and climate change

As a general rule, JRS responds to natural disasters when JRS projects or staff are already working close to the affected area, and (as in Indonesia and Haiti) when a community or camp accompanied by JRS is struck by a disaster. JRS does not usually engage in large-scale aid distribution, but rather focuses on accompanying and serving displaced persons and communities which have severe unmet or complex needs.

In emergencies, JRS works together with Jesuit structures already present in the affected area, responding to the immediate consequences of the emergency by providing services within its core competencies: education, medical help, basic food and non-food assistance, psychosocial support, reconciliation and advocacy. We always seek to work in coordination with experienced disaster response NGOs and the local authorities. Highly vulnerable communities and those with specific needs, for example, those that have previously experienced conflict displacement, receive special attention.

In the past decade, small island developing states (SIDs) have been very active in the climate change debate, making impassioned pleas to the United Nations to take action before they are submerged. The autonomous government of Bougainville (Papua New Guinea) is working towards permanently resettling communities from the atolls to the mainland of Bougainville. These communities are in increasingly





Displaced after the earthquake in Port au Prince, Haiti
(Peter Balleis SJ)

urgent need of resettlement due to sea water inundation causing salination of the soil, food insecurity, vulnerability to natural disasters, and other factors. Resettlement will be on a voluntary basis over the next 10 years. It is planned that the first 40 families from the Carteret Islands will be resettled in mid-2011. While the title to this land is already held by the government, agreement by customary landowners has been negotiated to ensure community support for the programme. This movement is one of the first planned relocations of a population because their land is no longer thought to be suitable on account of rising sea levels and environmental degradation. The authorities of Bougainville are conducting a needs assessment of both the population to be resettled and the community at the proposed relocation site. JRS Australia and UNHCR in Papua New Guinea are providing technical support for this needs assessment.

Displacement caused by natural and manmade disasters is an ongoing problem faced by Indonesia. A challenge is that there is a lack of knowledge about the situation and needs of former and current IDP communities. JRS seeks to inform the government and the NGO community about the plight of the IDPs and to lobby for continued support until a durable solution is found, whether in relocation sites or their original villages. JRS advocates for disaster prevention and response on village, district and national levels. We also enable disaster-prone communities to prevent displacement through risk analysis and mitigation. JRS is part of the UN Protection Cluster and the Technical Working Group for Disaster Risk Reduction.





Peace education programme in Kajokeji,
Southern Sudan (Don Doll SJ)

Peace and reconciliation

A faith that does justice

Peace and reconciliation work is increasingly being recognised as a priority need by JRS offices working in post-conflict situations, and is a developing area of JRS project-based advocacy. JRS approaches this work through the perspective of its three-fold mission, to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees, seeking to facilitate reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. Our response is inspired by a Christian faith that does justice, and is open to multi-religious and multi-cultural dialogue.

The Centre of the Dove, where JRS began its work in Cambodia, holds much important symbolism. During the civil war, it was a base from which carrier pigeons were sent out. During Pol Pot's rule, it was a killing field. During the early years of the Hun Sen regime, it was a prison. Now, through our work, it is a place where people rediscover their lives. At the Centre of the Dove, JRS brings together people from different factions of the Cambodian conflict, training them in vocational skills and to serve as teachers in society.

In 2006, JRS started working in Kitgum with Ugandan communities that have been severely affected by the war between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda. When the war officially ended in 2006, these communities began a long journey towards peace and reconciliation. JRS community-based counsellors held daily and weekly meetings with families to help them resolve numerous cases of domestic violence and substance abuse that emerged during this stressful





period. Reconciling former child soldiers with their families and communities, and encouraging relatives and friends to support vulnerable individuals, such as orphans and the elderly, were important objectives. JRS has witnessed a significant reduction in domestic violence cases, and is glad to see community members pooling their efforts to build huts for elderly people whose family members perished during the conflict. Currently, JRS, in collaboration with the Refugee Law Project, is providing input and documentation about its experience with victims of the war between the LRA and the Ugandan government. This is set to become part of a 'War Memorial' that will play a fundamental role in post-conflict healing and reconciliation, and will serve as a remembrance of those who suffered in the war.

In Southern Sudan, JRS promotes peace-building, community cohesiveness and reconciliation in Lobone, Kajo Keji and Nimule payams (administrative sections of a county). JRS works through community peace clubs, promoting peace-building activities at grassroots level. Each club has around 35 members, whose role is to address peace and stability issues in the community, to mediate in local conflicts, to provide guidance and counselling to others in the community and to raise awareness about civic responsibilities. The club members use songs, drama and traditional dance to transmit their message in local communities.

The concern of the Church for all refugees

The tragedy of refugees is "a wound which typifies and reveals the imbalance and conflicts of the modern world." It shows a divided world that is far from that ideal according to which "if one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Co 12:26). The Church offers her love and assistance to all refugees without distinction as to religion or race, respecting in each of them the inalienable dignity of the human person created in the image of God (cf. Gn 1:27).

Christians, strong in the certainty of their faith, must demonstrate that by placing the dignity of the human person with all his or her needs in first place, the obstacles created by injustice will begin to fall. They are aware that God, who walked with the refugees of the Exodus in search of a land free of any slavery is still walking with today's refugees in order to accomplish his loving plan together with them.

Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity
Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", 1992



JRS mission:

To accompany, serve and advocate

All those associated with JRS will tell you: “The refugees are our teachers.” As an organisation, JRS was built from the bottom up. Experience in the field and reflection on that experience gave JRS its shape. The vision of JRS comes from its founder, Pedro Arrupe SJ, and 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. Advocacy flows from this service and accompaniment, and is in itself a service to forcibly displaced people. JRS can own and be true to its mission “to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees” because it is exemplified in our lived experience on the ground.

Implementing the JRS mission, staff members have developed valuable grassroots insights into the needs and aspirations of forcibly displaced people. It is these insights that make our advocacy work current, relevant, reflective and responsive.

Wherever we work, our commitment to advocacy is an integral part of our mission. With our unique perspective on refugee issues, deriving directly from our accompaniment, JRS advocacy is capable of offering help, hope and a voice to vulnerable people on the move. Through our presence among the displaced, and our active witness to their plight, all JRS staff members are empowered to use advocacy as a powerful tool to relieve human suffering and to open the way to a better future for those we serve.





Displaced children in Haiti
(Peter Balleis SJ)



JRS contact details

NORTH AMERICA - USA

1016 16th Street NW,
Suite 500 Washington, DC 20036
united.states@jrs.net
Tel: +1 202 462 0400
Fax: +1 202 328 9212
www.jrsusa.org

LATIN AMERICA

Carrera 25 No. 39-79. of.322.
Bogotá, DC Colombia
incidenci@sjrlac.org
Tel: +57 (1) 3681466 ext. 109
www.sjrlac.org

EUROPE

Rue du Progrès, 333/2
B-1030 Bruxelles Belgium
europe.advocacy@jrs.net
europe.senioradvocacy@jrs.net
Tel: +32 2 250 3220
Fax: +32 2 250 3229
www.jrseurope.org

EASTERN AFRICA

PO Box 76490
Nairobi 00508 Kenya
(Location: JRS Mikono Centre, Gitanga
Road, opposite AMECEA)
easternafrika.advocacy@jrs.net
Tel: +254 20 38 73849
Fax: +254 20 38 71905
www.jrsea.org

GREAT LAKES

B.P. 2382
Bujumbura, Burundi
(Location: Boulevard
du 28 Novembre n°5, Rohero 1)
grandslacs.advocacy@jrs.net
Tel: +257 22 210 494
Fax: +257 22 243 492

SOUTHERN AFRICA

PO Box 522515
Saxonwold 2132, Johannesburg,
South Africa
(Location: 158 Oxford Road,
St. Vincent's School, Melrose 2196,
Johannesburg)
saadvocacy@jrs.net
Tel/Fax: +27 11 327 0811

WEST AFRICA

C/O PÈRES JÉSUITES
Maison St François Xavier
C.C.U.- Centre Catholique Universitaire
Quartier DJON MELEN
Carrefour E.M.I.A.
B.P. 876 Yaoundé
Cameroun
www.jrswestafrica.org

ASIA PACIFIC

PO Box 49, Sanampao Post Office
Bangkok 10406, Thailand
(Location: 43 Rachwithi Soi 12, Vic-
tory Monument, Phayathai, Bangkok
10400, Thailand) asiapacificrao@jrs.
orth
Tel: +66 2 640 9590
Tel: +66 2 278 4182
Fax: +66 2 271 3632
www.jrsap.org

SOUTH ASIA

Indian Social Institute
10, Institutional Area
Lodi Road, New Delhi 110003
south.asia@jrs.net
Tel: 011 - 24642072, 49534106
Fax: 011 - 24690660, 49534101

MIDDLE EAST

Syria Residence des Pères Jésuites
Azbakieh, Damascus
damasdir@gmail.com

INTERNATIONAL OFFICE (Rome, Geneva)

Borgo S. Spirito 4, 00193 Roma, Italy
international.advocacy@jrs.net
Tel: +39 06 689 77 465
Fax: +39 06 689 77 461
www.jrs.net





