

Immediate release

Press Release

Jesuit Refugee Service

Rome, 4 November 2010

30 years on, maintaining the depth of the JRS mission

JRS, putting refugees first

On 14 November 1980 – in a world dominated by ideology and repression – Jesuits moved to meet the humanitarian and education needs of the Vietnamese boat people, and JRS was born. Today, the **number of forcibly displaced persons** worldwide has **increased from 16 to 45 million**.

Thirty years since the initial vision of its founding father, and former superior general, Pedro Arrupe SJ, JRS, an international humanitarian organisation with projects in 51 countries worldwide, has dramatically increased the scale and scope of its services – education, emergency assistance, healthcare, human rights protection, **servicing more than half a million refugees**.

“Accompaniment is the heart of this approach. **Our place is close to refugees**, being touched by their reality: in camps, conflict zones, detention centres... **on the margins of society**. This closeness teaches us how best to serve and advocate on behalf of refugees and promote justice and reconciliation”, explained JRS International Director, Peter Balleis SJ.

Central to modern displacement is greed: fuelling insecurity and growing economic disparity. This scramble for resources frequently ends in conflict and persecution. Fleeing extreme poverty and human rights violations, desperate migrants and refugees are then forced to face exploitation and xenophobia.

For this and many other reasons, **JRS places the highest priority on ensuring a future for refugees by investing in education and training**. Worldwide, JRS provides primary, secondary, third level and vocational education services to approximately 280,000 children, young people and adults every year.

Throughout our 30 years, JRS has remained true to its mission: going where the need is greatest and

leaving only once the refugee challenge has been resolved. Working closely with refugees and in cooperation with all people of goodwill, with a non-proselytising presence, JRS welcomes people of all traditions to share and help in its mission.

Without this closeness to refugees, our work in the centres of power – be it Geneva, Rome, Brussels, Nairobi, Delhi or Washington – would not be possible. In partnership with refugees – based on solid research – JRS tries to address the root causes of forced displacement. Simply stated, JRS works to empower refugees and host communities to defend their human rights, promoting harmony and dignity.

To commemorate 30 years of service to refugees, three Jesuit organisations – JRS, Centro Astalli and Magis – have organised a calendar of events:

- on 9 November at 16:00, a **lecture at the Gregorian University, The world mobilised. The Jesuit Response to Refugees,** given by former **JRS International Director, Mark Raper SJ**; and
- **on 14 November**, a mass **in the Chiesa Gesù**, followed by a **concert of young musicians Sonidos de la Tierra**

The orchestra, comprising a group of 40 young musicians from marginalised communities, some of whom are displaced, will play modern and traditional music from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. The theme, overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers, is a testimony to the dream of a world at peace without borders.

Notes to the editor:

JRS works in over 50 countries in six continents around the world. It employs over 1,000 staff: lay, Jesuits and other religious to meet the education, health, social and other needs of 500,000 refugees and IDPs, more than half of whom are women. Its services are provided to refugees regardless of their race, ethnic origin, or religious beliefs.

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