



Shan Grandmother and child - What future do they have?

" we spoke to a little girl who lives with her grandmother— her mother had died and the father left them and did not return "

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ADVENT PROJECT with CHRIST THE KING CHURCH

As part of its mission and outreach programme, the parish of Christ The King decided last year to work with JRS Singapore to help a group of Shan refugees in Northern Thailand.

Visit

In October 2005, eight parishioners led by Fr Robert and Samuel Tan joined several JRS members to visit Krung Jor Refugee Camp along the Thai-Burma border.



One in Love and Service with the refugees

For three days, the parishioners and JRS members lived in a bamboo hut, slept in sleeping bags and experienced a little of the lifestyle of the refugees. They spent the days talking to the refugees, listening to their very moving stories and finding out their needs.

Many of the refugees lost their loved ones as a result of the civil war in Burma. Unable to return home, they



Shan living conditions

now face an uncertain future. There were no medical facilities at the camp, and the children had no proper education.

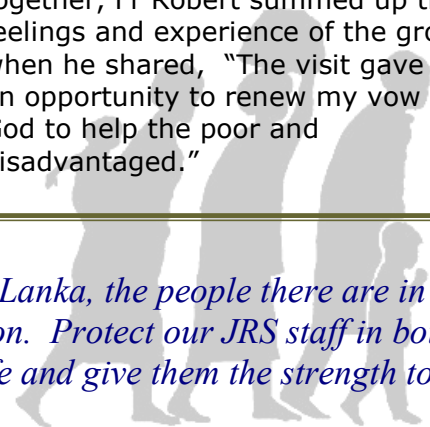
Reflections

David Lau, a JRS volunteer, was touched by the fact that the refugees were able to persevere in the midst of all their hardship. He said, " We met a 72 year old grandmother who had to support her 4 orphaned grandchildren. She had to walk about 2 km each day to cut wood and then sell it at the market. ... If only the children in Singapore could witness this."

At the end of the visit, when the group celebrated the Eucharist together, Fr Robert summed up the feelings and experience of the group when he shared, "The visit gave me an opportunity to renew my vow to God to help the poor and disadvantaged."

Let Us Pray...

Dear God, please bring peace to Sri Lanka, the people there are in dire need of your love and compassion. Protect our JRS staff in both Sri Lanka and Nepal. Keep them safe and give them the strength to do your work. Amen.



Krung Jor Refugee Camp Project



A Shan woman

On returning to Singapore, the parishioners briefed Fr Peter Koh, their parish priest, on their visit. The priests of the parish, Fr Peter, Fr Stephen and Fr Robert, were unstinting in their support. To kickstart the outreach programme, an Advent booklet was produced by the parish, containing information on the plight of refugees and reflections on the meaning of Christmas and why we, as Christians, should help the poor. The youths of the parish set up an exhibition on refugee life, and the "refugee hut" which they built was visited by many. They also produced a video of the visit.

JRS Singapore assisted by producing a powerpoint presentation on the plight of refugees, which was shown at all Masses one weekend, and a pamphlet entitled "One in Love & Service", which is also the parish mission statement. Fr. Bernard Arputhusingam S.J., JRS Asia-Pacific Director, flew down from Bangkok to celebrate Mass with the parishioners, and a JRS worker, Joe, gave a talk on the refugee situation.

Response of the parishioners

The response received from the parishioners was fantastic!



Shan child—How can we not care?



Loom to make cloth for sale

Parishioners were visibly touched by the various presentations, and some were moved to tears. Many were seen bringing their children to view the exhibition and posters put up at the church. They were also very generous, and the funds collected during Advent for the project will be used to :-

1. assist the refugees in income-generating projects like weaving of mats, bags and baskets, making of soya bean crackers and the rearing of catfish



Truck for Emergency use

2. provide a second-hand truck to ferry the sick to hospital 30 km away;
3. build three toilets and a shed; and
4. help in the education of refugee children.

The parish has committed itself to helping the refugees for a period of at least two years.

True meaning of Christmas

Doris Khoo, who is coordinating the JRS subcommittee on this project, was overwhelmed by the response of the parishioners. She said, "This was truly a beautiful way of celebrating Christmas – helping people who are in real need!"

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difference!**

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**Thank you for
making our work with
refugees
possible.**

Holy Week — washing of feet

On Saturday, 8 April, in preparation for Holy Week, 30 JRS volunteers and Fr Colin Tan S.J. gathered together to re-enact the scene when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. Before we washed each other's feet, we reflected on the passage in John 13 : 13-15 when Jesus said:



Fr Colin washing the feet of a JRS
volunteer

"You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, **have washed your feet**, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

The act of washing each other's feet reminded us of the challenge for us to continuously serve each other, especially those in need and disadvantaged, like the refugees. It also reminded us of the need to be humble in the way we serve others, no matter what station of life we belong to. It was truly a humbling experience.

Coming Soon ...

- World Refugee Day Mass will be celebrated on 29 June 2006 at Church of St Ignatius by Archbishop Nicholas Chia : Please keep that date free and join us."
- Old Wanka Construction Project — JRS Singapore visit to Mae Sot to help upgrade school and medical clinic

About Our Organisation

JRS is an international Catholic organization with a mission to accompany, serve and plead for the rights of refugees and internally displaced people. JRS was founded by the Jesuits in 1980 and the priority is to be where the need is greatest or where no other organisation is present.

