

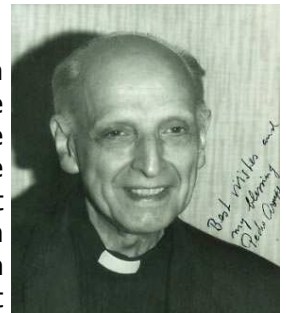


FR ARRUPE'S BIRTHDAY - MESSAGE TO JRS



This picture of a Cambodian Refugee Child was painted in Khao I Dang camp in Thailand in 1981. Ngeth Sim, the painter, born in Phnom Penh, escaped the horrors of the Pol Pot regime in May 1981. The faces in all his paintings express the suffering of the refugees. Like a refugee itself, this painting travelled with the first International Director of JRS, Fr. Dieter Scholz SJ, to Rome in 1985. Later for some years it found a place in the Jesuit Mission Office in Nuernberg. Now it has returned again to the International Office of JRS in Rome. There it reminds us of the many refugees and forcible displaced people all over the world whom JRS serves. The picture also keeps awake the memories of the early beginnings of JRS. Ngeth Sim arrived in Thailand as a refugee two months before Fr. Arrupe's last visit to the JRS members then in Thailand.

Fr. Arrupe had founded the Jesuit Refugee Service on his own birthday, the 14th November 1980, in response to the human tragedy of the refugees. He wrote: "The help needed is not only material: in a special way the Society of Jesus is being called to render a service that is human, pedagogical and spiritual." On 14th November 2007 the Society of Jesus remembers in gratitude the 100th birthday of Fr. Arrupe SJ. For JRS it is a special moment of gratitude to Fr. Arrupe for the inspiration and vision he has given JRS: to accompany, serve and advocate for the refugees.



Fr Pedro Arrupe - 1977

On this occasion also a special word of thanks needs to be offered in appreciation of Fr. Lluís Magriñà SJ, who has followed Mark Raper SJ, as International Director from 2000 until recent. Lluís Magriñà has accompanied and guided JRS during a time of expansion of its services to many more refugees and in 56 countries. At the same time he has strengthened the institutional structures and the advocacy network of JRS.

As it was for Lluís Magriñà, the vision of Arrupe will also be the point of reference and source of inspiration for JRS in the future. The face of the refugee child and the many faces of forcibly displaced people are at the heart of JRS. They will call on our compassion and service. Over three decades the challenges of forced displacement have grown and become more complex.

Because of this we are reminded of Fr. Arrupe's 'Swan Song'. On the 6th of August in Bangkok, he said: "I will say one more thing, and please don't forget it. Pray. Pray much. Problems such as these are not solved by human efforts."

*Peter Balleis SJ
International Director*

*Elías López Pérez SJ
Assistant International Director
Rome, JRS International Office, 14th November 2007*

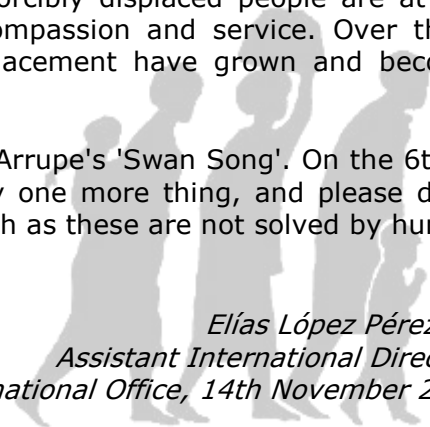
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AN INSPIRING VISIT TO A REFUGEE CAMP

The Krung Jor camp, at the Thai-Burmese border, houses more than 600 Shan refugees. They are one of the many ethnic minority groups who had to flee from Burma as a result of armed conflict and persecution. Not recognized as refugees by the Thai Government, these Shan refugees are stateless, without any legal status; and deprived of any formal assistance and protection programs.

As part of a joint project, JRS Singapore has been working closely with Christ the King Parish to support this Shan camp by sponsoring the children's education, providing medical support, clothes, electricity and other basic needs. JRS also supports them in income-generating activities as these refugees are not allowed to work outside the camp.

Regular trips are made by both JRS Singapore and Christ the King parishioners to monitor the progress of the various ongoing projects. These trips are also an integral part of JRS' mission of accompaniment; to get to know the refugees and let them know that they are not forgotten.

During the recent trip in November, we saw, in the group of ten volunteers, three youths, aged 14 to 20 years, who were willing to sacrifice their vacation time and comfort, to visit a less fortunate people. For the boys, the experiences gained and the rewards reaped from the trip probably far surpassed what they thought were benefiting the refugees. Below is a reflection from one of the boys.

Mai Soon Kap!

("Hello" or "How are you?" in Shan language)

I have recently flown home from what I think will always be one of the most memorable trips of my life. To describe my whole experience of the mission trip at Thai-Burmese border with a single word, it would have to be ... "inspiring".

When at Krung Jor Camp, watch out for the Shan children if you intend to give them balloon sculptures! Energetic, innocent and armed with cute faces, they will flock to you like bees to honey. Do not worry though, as their laughing and smiling faces will distract you from their repeated whacking with balloon swords. Knowing some basic Shan language will greatly assist in breaking the ice with many adults at the camp. A slight bow, with both hands clasped and a friendly greeting of "Mai Soon Kap!" will definitely put a smile on their faces.

The Shan refugees, despite the little they have, are extremely hospitable. They serve their visitors with their overwhelming flow of snacks which include deep-fried black sesame glutinous rice cakes dipped in sugar, yellow bean koropok and deep-fried crispy sweet potato. Made from their limited rations or home-grown, they are all extremely delicious! Coupled with their hot tea, this deadly combination will leave you yearning for more and your waistline a few inches longer.

The lifestyle of the Shan refugees will never cease to amaze me. The walls of their huts are intricately woven with flattened bamboo, while rows of long leaves are used to cover the top, making up the roof. On the inside, they only have space big enough for a bed and an occasional kitchen, yet, housing the whole family.

When night falls, it gets pitch dark at night and the only sources of light are the few bulbs, powered by a single generator, hanging from wires along the



The kids waiting anxiously, with gleaming eyes, for their balloon

VACANCIES AVAILABLE:

**JRS Sri Lanka is
looking for:**

- **An experienced person** to head an English Language Teachers' Training Academy in Mannar.
- **A Census Officer** to help collect data on the number of displaced and missing people in Batticaloa, Jaffna and Mannar.

For more information, please email: admin@jrssingapore.org or call Dawn Yen at 9825 6621.

AN INSPIRING VISIT TO A REFUGEE CAMP

dirt road next to their houses. In other words, they have absolutely no lighting in their huts. During this time of year, the nights would be freezing cold. I shiver to imagine their many sleepless nights trying to keep warm.

My favourite part of their simple abode would be their gardens of different sizes. The smaller gardens, lined with recycled bottles stuck into the ground or bamboo, would contain smaller plants while the bigger gardens are sometimes used to grow their own fruits or vegetables.



I am truly amazed at their simplistic life and I admire their content with the little they have. I enjoyed their company and am very glad to have made this trip. This experience has been truly invaluable. The Shan refugees have taught me many important values of life. In my opinion, they have helped me more than I have helped them. Frankly speaking, a part of me hopes that the Shans would continue to live their lives as they are living them now so that I may be able to go back once again to visit them. But I also hope that one day, they would be able to return to their country, and have a home they can truly call their own.

Sigh... I miss them already ;(

Sharing by: Cheong Tze-Shenn, Jason - aged 14



Koropok made from their ration of yellow beans

COME! HEAR US!

In September, four volunteers from JRS Singapore visited Kumpulan ACTS Bhd (or "ACTS"- acronym for "A Call To Serve") to better understand their work with the refugees in Malaysia.

We visited a jungle site, a convalescence home (PERCH), a school run by the CSO (Chin Student Organization), and an urban clinic. At these places, we spoke to a few refugees to understand their plight and the general situation of Burmese refugees in Malaysia. This is their story :

David, 28 years old, person-in-charge of the jungle site:

"I came to Malaysia 10 months ago. I graduated in theology from a Bible college in India. When I returned to Burma in 2005, I was arrested by the military government. Because of some religious books which I'd brought back from India, they suspected me to be involved with the Chin underground insurgent group, and sentenced me to seven years jail term. I escaped from the jail after spending 2 years there and fled to Malaysia.



Mobile Clinic in Rural area

"It is very difficult for Burmese refugees in Malaysia here because we do not have a legal status and most of us don't speak English or Malay.



PERCH 1
- a convalescence home

COME! HEAR US! - CONT'D



Patient doing a physical

"Due to the fear of been caught by the police, we have to hide in the jungle. If we are arrested, we may be deported back to Thai border. Some lucky ones may eventually find their way back here through 'agents', but there were many others who were sold by their agents to fishermen and other employers as hard labourers, and no one ever saw these people again."

Joseph - 36 years old, jungle site

"I came to Malaysia one and a half year ago. I lived in this community of 132 persons for 3 months. I was a farmer in Burma, my crop is not enough to feed my whole family. I wanted to find a job but couldn't find one. The biggest problem we face here is we do not have enough food for the community. It is very hard for us to find jobs because of our illegal status. Very few managed to find jobs and they shared their income with the community."

Gregory, 32 years old, a patient at PERCH

"I worked at a construction site through my friend's connection. I worked for 3 months but only got one month's pay of approximately RM400. In mid July, I got injured in an explosion at my work site. My body was badly burnt and my eye was also injured. I was sent to the hospital and stayed there for 10 days before ACTS came to help me and transferred me to PERCH.

"In PERCH, I get to rest and recover in a peaceful environment, free of financial worries. I am very thankful to God for sending ACTS to help me and the others."



Long queue to see the doctor

Teachers (Simon, Yelotana, etc) at CSO (Chin Student Organization) school

"We are refugees ourselves, from the Chin state, just like our students. We volunteered to be teachers to help prepare these children for future resettlement (to western countries, mainly USA). There are approximately 500 Chin children in our community. We teach Chin literature, English and Mathematics.

"We rented the 4th storey of some old shop houses to be our schools because their rental is relatively cheaper. However, as we are located in residential area, we are worried that our student will be too noisy and disturb our neighbours. If any of our neighbours complain to the authority, our school will be raided. There are no chairs and tables, all students have to sit on the ground and use a cardboard as a table. We cannot afford to provide food to the students so we have to release them to go home for lunch at noon."

Facts:

- *Burmese refugees fled their hometown for Malaysia hoping for a better life*
- *Most of them hoped to be resettled to western countries through UNHCR but the registration process (at UNHCR) has been overwhelmed by the influx of refugees and is extremely slow over the past few years.*
- *After registration, they will still need to wait for a few more years for their turn to be resettled.*
- *With or without registration with UNHCR, they are still illegal and could be arrested, put into jail, and deported back to Burma.*



Medical care in the plantation

Despite all these ordeals, the Chin people whom I have met in this trip still maintain a strong faith in God. Although they are "illegal", they are a bunch of hardworking, honest and law-abiding people who do not commit crimes like theft or robbery. They are indeed living out the two bible verses which they have written on a board at the jungle site:

"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble"
Psalm 46:1; &

"Love Tenderly, Act Justly, Walk Humbly" MICAH 6:8

Sharing by: Matthew Lim

IN MEMORY OF FR NICHOLASPILLAI PACHIA RANJITH- JRS Coordinator killed in Sri Lanka

On 26 September 2007, Fr. Nicholaspillai Packia Ranjith, our JRS Sri Lanka Mannar District Coordinator, was killed in a brutal claymore mine attack, at Vidathaltheevu, in the militant-controlled area of Mannar.



Photo source: TamilNet

Fr. Ranjith was driving the JRS van, on his way to an orphanage run by JRS to deliver baby milk, books and essential humanitarian supplies to displaced children, when he fell victim to the blast. Claymore mines are remote controlled. The assistant to the priest, Mr. Christopher Eugene, who was seated beside him, was seriously injured.



The JRS van which was driven by Fr Ranjith

Fr. Ranjith was born on the 11 June 1967 in Jaffna. His late father was a school teacher who worked in Mannar. As the family was in Mannar, Fr. Ranjith was educated there and joined the Mannar Diocese. He was ordained as a Priest on 17 December 1997. His mother and younger brother, who live in Canada, survive him. Fr. Ranjith had applied for a visa to further his studies in Canada. As the visa was rejected, he was planning to pursue his studies in Bangalore, India instead.

Fr. Ranjith was a soft spoken, fearless, young and dynamic priest who would always stand up for the cause of justice. His death is a great loss to JRS Sri Lanka and the entire JRS family.

Footnote:

In 1994, JRS adopted the International Campaign to Ban Landmines to accompany those hurt by mines. JRS supports landmine survivors in Bosnia, Angola, Cambodia, Zambia, Thailand and Kosovo. The Campaign was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

On 3 December, 1997, 122 States signed the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty. As at 15 August 2007, 155 States were signatories. Singapore is not a signatory to the Treaty.

Produced by
Jesuit Refugee
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Thank you for
making our work with
refugees possible.

**Check out our New Website:
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We welcome your feedback!**

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 our priority is to be where the need is greatest or where no other organisation is present.