

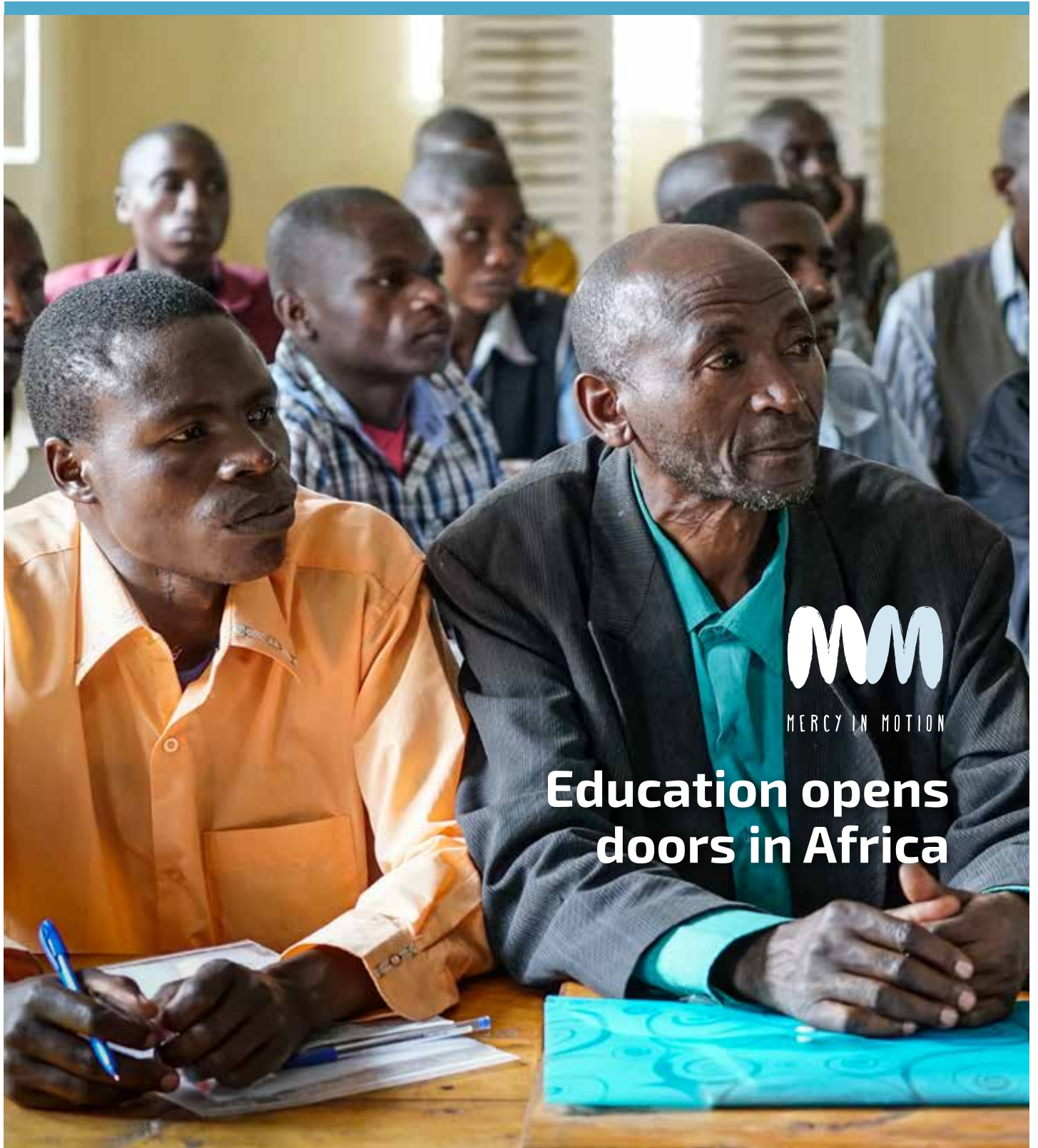


JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE

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MERCY IN MOTION

**Education opens
doors in Africa**

COVER PHOTO

Maths teachers listen carefully during a training session in Masisi, eastern Congo. (Don Doll SJ/JRS)

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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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Appeal | Mercy in Motion



Pope Francis has declared 2016 as the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Throughout this year, JRS is running a **Mercy in Motion** campaign to help 100,000 more young refugees to go to school. JRS is increasing the quantity and quality of its education services thanks to the generosity of friends and donors around the world who are supporting this campaign.



50-25-1

Surrounded by members of the JRS team, Fr Tom meets the headmaster of Bigiri Secondary School in Masisi, eastern Congo. (Don Doll SJ/JRS)

Dear Friends of JRS,

Greetings once again from Rome, and welcome to the Spring issue of *Servir*. The title of this editorial is not my padlock combination or the JRS office door code. It is simply the percentage of refugees who have access to different levels of education. They are startling percentages: an estimated 50% of refugees and displaced young people have access to primary education, 25% to secondary education, and less than 1% to tertiary or higher education.

To say 50-25-1 disturbs me is an understatement. Every human being has the right to education, and refugees and displaced people, perhaps more than others, need access to this right more than ever. Without education, the cycle of violence and displacement is difficult to break. Without education, young people become child soldiers and victims of trafficking. In an era of

increasing numbers of refugees and decreasing government budgets, education is often the first thing to go or to be cut. This may be an understandable short-term response, but what does it do to young lives in the long run?

This issue of *Servir* highlights JRS' commitment to education and *Mercy in Motion*, our fundraising and advocacy campaign to expand and improve education for refugees and displaced people. Inspired by Pope Francis' call for a Holy Year of Mercy, JRS seeks to expand educational services for an additional 100,000 refugees by 2020.

JRS hopes to put its mercy in motion in four specific ways:

1. Focus our educational efforts on those most in need - typically youth, the 25-1 in 50-25-1 of the title.

2. Expand and improve teacher training throughout JRS. Trained teachers are the best predictors of

educational success for the children and youth that JRS accompanies.

3. Offer additional opportunities for higher education, particularly in the formation of teachers. We want to educate more refugee teachers. With this education, they improve their own lives, they can support their families with a salary, and they become leaders in their communities and future homes.

4. Strengthen JRS' capacity to provide these and other services into the future.

As you read this issue, and consider the incredible work being done in places like Malawi, Cameroon, and Congo, I hope you will consider being part of *Mercy in Motion*. Education makes a difference. Help us make 50-25-1 a statistic from the past.

Know that you and all friends of JRS are in my prayers. Thank you for your support of our work. Peace.

Tom Smolich SJ | JRS International Director

To whom shall we go?

Michael Onyango, JRS Kakuma Director

“Even though I cannot see, I know more than many of you who can see, and that is what is important for me.” Rhoda Atong Majok is a South Sudanese refugee who lives in Kenya’s enormous and remote Kakuma camp. She is blind but nonetheless managed to score good marks in primary school, enabling her to continue to secondary level.

Like Rhoda, most refugees see education as an eye opener – in one way or another. Rhoda went to primary school outside Kakuma camp on a JRS scholarship program that sponsors 37 children with disabilities or with special protection

needs. JRS covers the school fees and the cost of books, uniforms, medicine, and transportation for the students to go to specially selected boarding schools.

Each expresses their appreciation for the chance to study in a different way. Mary Angel comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Once, when she saw me, Mary Angel jumped up and said, flapping her arms up and down: “I thank JRS for giving me wings to fly!” Mary Angel has no relatives in the camp and she has endured terrible ordeals in her young life. But now she is happy that she can learn. Not only: Mary

Angel has found a home away from home in a JRS safe haven that offers temporary protection.

The scholarship program and safe haven are part of a wide range of services that JRS offers to refugees in Kakuma who have more serious protection concerns than others. This could be because they have a disability, struggle with mental health challenges, or are at risk of sexual violence. The JRS team runs five centres that offer education, life skills, and vocational training, with an emphasis on creative art. For those who need additional help, there is physiotherapy and speech therapy.

Keeping busy at one of five special-needs centres run by JRS in Kenya's Kakuma camp. (Angela Wells/JRS)



Individual and group counselling are always available. Each child has an individualised care plan and the aim is to enable them to attend mainstream schools one day.

The close attention devoted by JRS to the care and education of refugees with disabilities serves a twofold purpose: by helping them to develop their unique potential, we also raise awareness about their abilities and about their right to have opportunities that are equal to those enjoyed by others. This increased awareness helps reduce the stigma that is still attached to disability in many societies among immediate family members as well as the community at large.

As service providers, I believe that our concern should be the 'value added' to the life of the individual we serve. I recently visited the child protection office of another NGO and met one of our former students who cannot hear or speak. Seeing my JRS identity card, he grabbed paper and pen and proudly wrote: "I am a child of JRS, you made me who I am. Look, I am sitting at a desk now."

Given how much can be achieved by helping children with disabilities to continue their education, my heart bleeds, because I know that right now we cannot give more scholarships due to lack of resources. When Rhoda came to the JRS office with Rose, another refugee who is blind, the education coordinator had to tell them that we cannot provide for their secondary education. They simply asked: "To whom shall we go?"

This is a very fundamental question that I believe we all ask at one time or other. But perhaps those who need more support ask it more frequently and with more urgency. It is my prayer that we find the resources to help Rhoda, Rose, and other vulnerable refugees. We cannot forget that they come to us in the hope that we can show them a way forward along a path that leads to life. ●



TESTIMONY

Mental health services show the benefit of being together, and the importance of caring for others, especially those most in need. Refugees come from war-torn zones after losing everything. They come here with horrible memories, memories of their homes being attacked in the middle of the night, and of life in war zones, so their mental health is obviously affected. I'll always remember one South Sudanese man who lost his entire family and was totally traumatised when he came to Kakuma. He could hardly speak. We welcomed

and counselled him. Eventually, he opened up and shared stories of injury and loss. We found him psychiatric care. He's recovering and studying in a secondary school today. I struggle with my own trauma too. Helping others has also helped me heal. I used to have nightmares of the camp being bombed, but now I've learned to deal with my fears in a healthy way, and to impact positively on others.

David Manyang comes from South Sudan. He has lived in Kakuma for some 20 years and serves as a JRS mental health supervisor.

By helping those with disabilities to develop their unique potential, we also raise awareness about their abilities and about their right to have opportunities that are equal to those enjoyed by others.

Keeping the flame of hope alive

Madeline Lacovara is co-chair of the Mercy in Motion campaign, and recently stepped down from the JRS USA Board after many years of service. Together with her husband, Philip, she has made a generous grant to JRS Eastern Africa education programs. She explains why she supports JRS.

For most of my professional life, I have been deeply involved in education. In my personal life, as the mother of seven, I was a consumer of education on behalf of my children. The importance of the basic ability to read, write, and do arithmetic became even clearer to me when I began to see many American adults with limited literacy and numeracy skills. Education really matters.

Too often we are what we can do. When I joined the JRS USA Board many years ago, it was partly because among many refugee services, JRS saw what an education could do for those without home or country.

In his essay, *An Unexpected Lifeline*, Gerald Martone quotes a woman who fled Darfur into Chad. She says: "We had to leave behind all our possessions. The only thing we could bring with us is what we have in our heads, what we have been taught – our education. Education is the only thing that cannot be taken from us."

Can any of us doubt the truth of this statement or not feel the pain of so much loss? With the average stay in a refugee camp as much as 17 years by some statistics, what makes more sense than teaching those who live and are even born there? Truly, if you lose your home, it is the camp itself that becomes your only hope

to learn, to have an education that will help you to leave someday, and to function in the "real" world. Schools are vital to any camp that is more than a short-stay environment.

It is a young population that needs educational services the most. Martone says: "A refugee camp is a young place; it is overwhelmingly populated by children." JRS responds to this need with primary schools and, as often as possible, with secondary schools as well.

We support the educational efforts of JRS because we believe that Jesuits know how to build effective educational environments even in the most difficult situations. In April I hope to travel to Kenya to meet with Fr Endashaw, the Regional Director of JRS Eastern Africa, and to see the schools we are supporting in Nairobi and in Kakuma camp. Knowing Fr Endashaw, and experiencing his gentle nature and complete commitment to his work, has made supporting the work of his region financially a true joy.

Late last year, we had the great privilege of joining other JRS supporters in Rome. On 14 November, we celebrated the founding of JRS by Pedro Arrupe as a response to the crisis of the Vietnamese 'boat people'. Today, with more than 60 million forcibly displaced people in the world, we appreciate just how visionary Arrupe was.

On that day last November, Pope Francis welcomed us in an audience with words of inspiration and great tenderness. The pope sees with compassion and mercy who we are called to be and he asked each of us to take up the cross of our displaced brothers and sisters. He urged us to keep alive the flame of hope, saying: "For children forced to emigrate, schools are places of freedom... To give a child a seat at school is the finest gift you can give."

It is an honour and a privilege for us to support the education of children and the efforts of JRS to "keep alive that flame of hope". We answer Pope Francis' call with joy. ●

📷 The Jesuit Superior General, Fr Adolfo Nicolás SJ, flanked by Madeline Lacovara and her husband Philip. (Jacquelyn Pavilon/JRS)





📷 Refugees in Malawi's Dzaleka camp celebrate their diploma, which they attained through the JRS/JC:HEM program. (Gushwell Brooks/JRS)

What is the practical potential of higher education?

Boom Martinez SJ, JRS International Education Coordinator

“Education for ultimate disappointment...” This startling statement appears in a 2011 global review of refugee education by UNHCR and is attributed to both “top UNHCR staff members and refugees”.

The indictment is harsh. The reality varies from place to place, with availability and standards of education uneven across regions and settings of displacement, especially for girls and at the secondary level. Much depends on the circumstances, the attitudes, and the resources at hand. All of which explains why JRS consistently does all it can to enhance the quality and reach of its education services.

If myriad challenges limit refugees’ access to primary and secondary education, just imagine tertiary education. Only 1% of refugees worldwide, whether they live in camps or in urban settings, manage to get there.

JRS has long sought to encourage refugees to go for higher education, usually through sponsorship and distance learning. However, in recent years, our efforts have become more systematic and widespread, thanks to a partnership with Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins (JC:HEM).

What we have discovered is that while the refugees who complete our diploma and certificate courses are

thrilled to have had this opportunity, we need to be careful that our higher education does not lead to “ultimate disappointment”.

After all, qualifications may not be worth much if they lead to a dead end: if they don’t help you win a place in competitive local universities in your host country; if you are not allowed out of the camp; or if it is next to impossible to find a job.

This doesn’t mean we should opt out of offering higher education. Quite the contrary: we should do all we can to help refugees overcome the barriers they face in getting on with their education and their lives. So, for example, we have realised that a criterion of any JRS higher

JRS has always emphasised teacher training and we are looking to consolidate our experience in a package that may be adapted for our refugee teachers worldwide.

education program must be that local universities recognise its certificates.

Teaching languages is another example of the practical potential of higher education. Many of our courses start with learning English or French as a pre-requisite. This is a huge help for refugees because language skills can boost their chances of getting into university, of finding work, of integrating better in their host country, or of being resettled to a third country.

What we are trying to do is to give refugees something solid through our higher education initiatives, something that improves their quality of life as individuals, families, and communities in the here-and-now, and that gives hope for the future.

As JRS, we believe we bring an added value: a dimension that emphasises the values that lie at the root of our Christian faith, especially justice, peace, solidarity, and compassion for the “least” among us.

Hicuburundi Hermenegilde, who got his diploma in liberal arts through JRS/JC:HEM in Dzaleka camp in Malawi, summed it up nicely: “The course changed my life. All I do now will be in connection with the statement: ‘Don’t do to others what you do not expect them to do to you.’ I will help to provide leadership in showing people what may be done in order to live in peace.”

This is hugely important because the past and present reality of refugees anywhere in the world is marked in one way or another by deep tensions, hostility, and violence. Just think about the exploitation of religious and ethnic differences at the root of so many conflicts generating refugees today, and how this affects the welcome refugees receive in suspicious host countries.

If they are to build a better future, refugees need to have the skills to understand, articulate,

and positively influence what is going on around them. An array of skills comes into play here: creating shared spaces, conflict assessment and resolution, peace-building, communications and advocacy, and leadership, among others.

Another way in which our higher education programs can be truly useful is by making refugees more employable, giving them better chances of choosing and finding a job that fits them well. Many of the courses that JRS currently offers with JC:HEM, known as community service learning tracks (CSLTs), are geared towards finding jobs in the camps, either with JRS or with other agencies.

But it is not only about employability, it’s also about empowering the refugees and improving the quality of life of their community, by making sure that the services they receive are truly professional.

Take teacher training: one of the reasons why refugee education is sometimes felt to disappoint is because teachers are – through no fault of their own – poorly qualified and not well trained. Offering a solid teacher-training program will do more than anything to enhance the quality of the other education services we offer, from pre-primary level upwards. JRS has always emphasised teacher training and we are looking to consolidate our experience in a package that may be adapted for our refugee teachers worldwide, based on our mission of accompaniment, service, and advocacy.

In a nutshell, we want our higher education programs to be as relevant and worthwhile as possible for the refugees who take them up and for their communities. We cannot pretend that we can give a solution for all their ills, but we can do our best to give refugees a good education that helps to develop their potential to live life to the full. ●

I am a community leader now

Masumbuko Ramazan Lubunga

When I came to Malawi, I didn't know if I could sharpen my life again, due to the disappointments I had after losing all my strong academic documents. But thanks to the tracks offered by JRS and JC:HEM, especially the ones about community communication and journalism, performing arts, peace and conflict resolution, I have a good starting point. What I have learned is a weapon not just for me: my studies have turned me into a community worker.

I did my best to start a radio in the camp, with two loudspeakers, one amplifier, and two microphones. That idea has become reality now because we have a transmitter and all the materials needed. It is something simple but helpful for the community.

I created the first permanent drama group for community change in Dzaleka camp, training 15 young people. Plus, I set up a music band called *Étoiles de la paix* (Stars of

peace), which has participated in national events.

Now I am directing a children's Arts Club that we set up in 2015. This club is an important service because, apart from promoting and developing the children's talent, it helps to challenge and change difficult behaviours that they may exhibit towards their families and others. What's more, the club is a way of building relationships between orphans, unaccompanied children, and the rest of the community. We are giving children a voice, because often they are voiceless, especially if they are alone and vulnerable.

I also try to be a voice for the voiceless in my voluntary work as community mobilizer with another NGO, by advocating with the camp officers for other refugees, and by creating links between the community and organisations that work in Dzaleka camp.



And so the skills we are learning are changing this community every day. I consider myself as a community leader, because I say to myself: if I do not get involved, how can I expect anything to change? It is my responsibility to share my skills with others. ●



Children playing in Dzaleka. One of Masumbuko's projects is an Arts Club that brings children together and develops their creative talents. (Giulio D'Ercole/JRS)



📷 St George's College in Zimbabwe hosts its Mercy in Motion event.

I want to help

The Mercy in Motion campaign is inspiring people from all walks of life to do something hopeful, meaningful, and transformative during the world's unprecedented refugee crisis. The campaign is not just about fundraising. There are many things you can do: volunteering, supporting refugees in your country, events in your parish or school... To inspire you, we share a few efforts.

ZIMBABWE

A generous response

Zerene Haddad of JRS International writes: Zimbabwe might not seem the ideal location to ask people to participate in a fundraising campaign – unemployment is high, cost of living is even higher, and most people struggle to make ends meet. However, when the opportunity to talk about Mercy in Motion came up, it was not to be missed. St George's College is a Jesuit secondary school in Harare. Officially it ranks as one of the top 10 secondary schools in Africa.

I was invited to give the closing speech at a ceremony for students that marked the completion of Service Projects, an immersion experiment with underprivileged people. In my speech, I focused on St Michael's, another secondary school, which is located 560km away from the prestige and privilege of St George's, in a refugee camp. Very few Zimbabweans even know of the existence of the remote Tongogara camp, the official designated area where refugees live in Zimbabwe.

The outcome of this seven-minute talk astounded me. Before the ceremony ended, one parent called upon all present to contribute towards an immediate collection. Parents lined up to talk to me. Some wanted to know how to get involved directly, others left business cards with "Please call, I want to help" scrawled on the back. Over \$500 was raised in cash immediately and there was a \$20,000 textbook donation. And ideas are still pouring in!

INDIA

Let your light shine

At Loyola College in Chennai, India, students are challenged to live up to the school's motto: Let Your Light Shine (Matt 5:16). By so doing, they become beacons of hope who contribute to the liberation of others. In the spirit of this motto and the Jesuit tradition, students and staff will host a special Mercy in Motion event to highlight the plight of refugees around the world, with a focus on their right to access quality education. The Mercy in

Motion event will be held around World Refugee Day on 20 June. Ideas include a seminar, testimonies, a film festival, and a photo exhibition. Organisers hope to help the college look inward – focusing on refugee issues in India – and outward, seeking to understand the larger phenomenon, paying special attention to the transformative role of education for refugees near and far.

If you would like to be part of promoting a similar event at your school, college, or university, please contact Jill at jill.drzewiecki@jrs.net

USA

Concerts for refugees

Emmylou Harris, the 13-time Grammy Award-winning singer and songwriter who spearheaded *Concerts for a Landmine Free World*, has committed to a series of concerts to support Mercy in Motion. Many of the artists who pledged their time and talent to the concert series against landmines have now committed to a tour called *Lampedusa: Concerts for Refugees*. For years, Ms Harris drew upon her

celebrity power to bring musicians and actors to the Campaign to Ban Landmines. When, in December 1997, the landmine campaign received the Nobel Peace Prize, Ms Harris was invited to perform at the award ceremony in Oslo. For *Lampedusa: Concerts for Refugees*, JRS is also reaching out to emerging talent who can be added to the bill. The acoustic tour is scheduled for October in 10 cities across the US.

If you would like to be part of promoting or supporting the concert series, please contact Gail at ggriffith@jesuits.org



EUROPE

Jesuit alumni learn from refugees

The World Union of Jesuit Alumni (WUJA) has a tradition of bringing together former students of Jesuit schools, colleges, and universities around themes related to values promoted by the Society of Jesus. As part of the Mercy in Motion campaign, JRS is collaborating with WUJA to plan the Union's European Encounter in September 2016. Following a pilgrimage in Italy, in the footsteps of St Francis, alumni

from all over Europe will gather for a meeting to understand more deeply the global refugee crisis and to discern their responsibility in the light of this crisis. JRS is helping to put the program together, emphasising the importance of access to education for refugees. WUJA members will also have the opportunity to meet and to listen to refugees living in Rome.

For more information, please visit wuja.org



More than education

Sr Jéline Giris is one of three Marist Missionary Sisters who are part of a JRS education project in eastern Cameroon. The aim of the project is to help the Catholic Diocese of Batouri to run five primary schools in the villages of Boubara and Kette, which welcome refugees from Central African Republic. The mission started in early 2015. Sr Jéline shares her take on Mercy in Motion.

Mercy in Motion: the image that comes to mind is the wheel of a car turning, a movement forward, not too fast but moving forward all the same. Our involvement in the schools in Boubara and Kette has been somewhat like that. Things got off the ground, then we had setbacks,

we stopped, and began again.

There have been plenty of frustrations yet we have kept moving forward slowly. We found our way around the villages, and got to know the people with whom we were going to work, as well as the authorities. All this was not easy, so each of us counted so much on our inner strength to continue to believe in the project we had accepted to fulfill as JRS.

It was a big struggle in the beginning. Still, we kept trying and, almost a year later, things are moving along just fine.

As JRS, we got involved because the schools were welcoming refugee children. When we first went to the schools, two or three teachers were teaching 600 or 700-plus children in rundown and overcrowded conditions. More than 200 children sat in classrooms built for 40 or 50.

Many children sat on the floor: not on mats, on the floor. Materials like copybooks for children and textbooks for teachers were lacking.

Once we took Fr Eric, the JRS West Africa Director, to visit. In one classroom, when he greeted the 258 pupils and told them to sit down, they dutifully replied: “*Je m’assieds sur le banc*” (I sit on the bench). Before, I had never paid attention to what they said when we asked them to sit. Now it breaks my heart each time I hear those little first graders say they are sitting on the bench when they are not.

Children should not have to try to learn in such conditions. Many give up: they drop out or are frequently absent. This is what we are facing. So far, we have recruited 15 teachers, we are renovating the classrooms and buying more desks, and we distributed teaching materials.

📷 Sr Jéline (carrying a green backpack) at the Catholic school in Kette, eastern Cameroon.





📷 Sr Regina Missanga serves with JRS in Masisi, eastern DRC. (Don Doll SJ/JRS)

! INFO POINT

Religious congregations, especially of women, have been partnering with JRS almost since the beginning 35 years ago. JRS wishes to express a deep gratitude to the sisters who embody Pope Francis' call to mercy by dedicating their lives to accompanying, serving, and defending the rights of refugees. Now more than ever, there is a need for religious men and women to partner with JRS in our mission. If your religious congregation is interested in a partnership with JRS, please contact Ken Gavin SJ at ken.gavin@jrs.net.

Mercy in Motion is partly about working together with the refugee and local communities to find suitable solutions to keep their children in school. But it is much more than that. Mercy in Motion is about being in solidarity with the refugees, accompanying them, and listening to their stories. We may not be able to do great things but our presence alone can heal and show them that there are people who care.

On the outskirts of Kette village, there is an informal site called Bethany that is home to almost 1500 refugees. The day we went to

raise awareness on “the importance of education for all”, we met very hungry people, who had not received their food rations. Not only the men turned up to meet us that day, the women also came out in droves. This was the toughest day for us because the last thing the refugees wanted to hear was how important education was for them.

So we showed our serious concern about their hunger, simply by listening and being present with them. We accompanied them at that most difficult time. We promised to find out why they had

not received their rations from UNHCR that month – and we did. I believe we won their respect and gained their confidence that day. The next time we had a meeting at Kette Public Primary School, many of the refugees from Bethany were present.

We do the best we can for the people we work with. Both the refugee and local communities need our support and we try to do all we can to help them coexist in harmony and to keep their hope alive, by sharing the mercy, love, and compassion of God with them. ●

A matter of survival

Martin Bahati SJ, JRS Great Lakes Director

Pascal lives in Kilimani camp in Masisi in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He finished secondary school successfully thanks to the support of JRS that paid half the fees for his studies. He proudly waves his diploma like it is a precious treasure he found on an isolated island in the middle of nowhere. This valiant piece of paper, which remains but a paper, is as carefully guarded as if it were made of gold.

Franck is 17. He has done the rounds of so many camps because of recurring conflict in Masisi. Going from one camp to another, he no longer dreams of going to school: there is neither the time nor the

security for that. His school has been the school of life on the move, through the forests and mountains, contemplating nature and birdsong.

Today, as he comes knocking on the door of adulthood, his life holds little meaning for him. He doesn't know how to read or write. Learning carpentry at one of the JRS training centres seems to be Franck's only hope of doing something with his youth and his life, as long as nothing happens to disturb the apparent calm prevailing in the region, as elections in Congo and Rwanda approach.

Franck's biggest concern and desire is to become a competent

carpenter who makes good chairs, solid beds, and quality cupboards. Sometimes, he is gripped by anger because he didn't have a stable life, and could not even do his primary education. But then, as Franck says when he comes to himself: "There is always someone worse off than me, that's life."

Is this life?

That's life in eastern DRC, which has been shaken by internal and external wars for nearly three decades. The many levels of violence tearing the region apart have caused the displacement of countless people over the years, including many who



© A camp for internally displaced people in Mweso, eastern DRC. (Don Doll SJ/JRS)

look for a safer place in the area itself. More than one million people are displaced in Congo's eastern provinces of North and South Kivu. In North Kivu, where JRS is present, there are an estimated 744,500 displaced people.

Life is very difficult in the camps where the displaced people live. There is destitution, want of everything: health, education, safety, food, water. The needs of the people are multiple and diverse. When one need is satisfied, another emerges, sometimes more essential than the first. It is very hard to lead a balanced and decent life in such destabilising conditions. Family and communal dynamics are weakened. Children cannot follow the normal school curriculum.

And children who do not go to school, because of insecurity and frequent displacement, are easy prey. One danger is recruitment in the armed groups that flood the Congolese rural areas and forests. And so the vicious cycle continues. Ignorance overwhelms so many young people, at worst sending them to fight, and prompting them to barbarity and killing.

Only education can make a difference

There are many urgent needs that cry out to be met. However, in the current state of the Great Lakes region, and this means not only conflict in Congo, but also violence in Burundi, and seeming calm in Rwanda, it is only education that can make a real difference.

We can give displaced people food, build huts for them, or offer them medical and psychosocial care. But if we do not teach them to reflect critically, to discern about the world around them, and if we do not help them to become independent, then we are condemning them to be perpetual parasites, through no fault of their own, instead of people who are free and standing on their



own feet. And we would be failing to address the root of the problem.

This is why JRS offers the possibility of education, paying the fees of displaced children, training teachers, and building schools. Some of the work we do should fall within the province of the government and not of humanitarian NGOs. However we have been unable to remain indifferent to the suffering of countless people so we have decided to do what we can.

In Goma, Masisi, and Mweso in North Kivu, JRS promotes quality education at primary and secondary levels and, through a mix of online and onsite learning, at the tertiary level as well. And we run vocational training programs. Investing in young people in this “no man’s land” is an ever-expanding task that calls for more means than we currently have. But with faith and audacity we can do our part to change the world.

You do find success stories in the education domain. Take young Augustin, a teaching inspector in Goma. After living as a refugee for 11 years in a camp in Uganda, and benefiting from educational opportunities offered by JRS there, he returned to Congo where he became a secondary education

📷 A school supported by JRS in Goma, eastern DRC. (Don Doll SJ/JRS)

Children who do not go to school, because of insecurity and frequent displacement, are easy prey. One danger is recruitment in armed groups.

inspector. Not only is Augustin self-sufficient, he also helps displaced children who face problems in accessing education. He is giving back to the suffering community what he received through the salvific support of JRS.

We need value-based education

In a region bogged down by interethnic conflict, where people sometimes hate each other to death, a question begs to be asked: what education can we give to those born in such violence? What education can we offer to child soldiers, to children who are displaced time and again? A society in conflict for decades has a big problem to decide which values to learn and to teach, because each group brands its values as the best while despising the rest.

A quality education based on humane values lifts the spirit,

introduces new perspectives, goes beyond prejudices, and leads to life. JRS is convinced that only education promoting peaceful coexistence and personal flourishing can form citizens who are capable of putting the region back on track. Such education directly challenges the prevailing situation because it calls for the transition from hate to love, from war to reconciliation, from deceit to truth, from prejudice to freedom, and from mistrust to peaceful cohabitation.

A chance for peace

Each and every opportunity given to the young people of the Great Lakes to access a good education is a chance for the entire region. It is a chance for peace and reconciliation. The road ahead is long and difficult but JRS has already taken some real steps forward. After all, any journey

starts with the first steps. What we do might appear insignificant and insufficient but it bears seeds of hope for generations to come.

The young people who go to school, who are trained in carpentry, tailoring, masonry, hairdressing, catering, and baking surely carry in them the seeds of a reconciled and conflict-free society. This generation has known the agonies of war and has paid the price of violence. It has cried so much, and now it is drying its tears, to get down to work and learn from the past. It is said that 'one doesn't see properly except with eyes that have cried'. We firmly believe that education will open the eyes of thousands of people like Pascal and Franck. And so, as JRS, we will continue to do more and more of what we know how to do best: we will educate! ●



📷 A school supported by JRS in Goma, eastern DRC.
(Don Doll SJ/JRS)

📷 Getting a facial in Zimbabwe's Tongogara camp: this modest luxury is available thanks to the vocational training supported by JRS. (Zerene Haddad/JRS)



Beyond the horizon

*Zerene Haddad,
JRS International Fundraising
Coordinator*

Hidden in plain sight, without any fence or entrance, just off a main transport artery that connects Zimbabwe to South Africa, lies Tongogara camp.

Bordered on one side by the Save River Nature Conservancy, where wild animals roam free, and on the other by repossessed farms that now lie empty, this place is home to over 10,000 refugees.

Established in the 1980s, Tongogara housed Mozambican refugees during their civil war. Now it is home to Congolese, Rwandans, Burundians, Ethiopians, Somalis, and others from across sub-Saharan Africa. Many have never seen the country they call “home”.

They were born and raised in Tongogara camp, without electricity, without running water, without a town nearby, surrounded by dust and interminable heat. Some children have never left the camp. Many old people will die and be buried in the graveyard, just beyond the boundary of the camp, forever in exile.

I wander around the camp, a fine layer of dust coating my feet, and

the sun causing me to pause under trees as often as possible for respite. Children on their way back from school stream past me, some hiding from the sun beneath umbrellas, others racing home. Their curiosity is unabashed. They are delighted by my presence, quick to make a joke at my expense, and eager to chat.

The teenagers may be cut off from the world but are desperate to be a part of it, sporting trendy hairstyles. They watch TV series on laptops that are connected to inverters, which are linked up to generators. Anything to keep up with the outside world.

I muster enough courage to approach a group that is practising for the church choir. They have a keyboard and roughshod drumsticks that tap out the beat on the wooden bench. Their music has the unmistakable Congolese jive that makes you think you are heading to a dancehall, not a church service. The sounds of a soccer match on TV in a nearby kiosk fade into the background as their voices swell, rising on the air, overwhelming all else, and then fall away gradually.



📷 School's out: children head home in Tongogara at the end of their school day. (Zerene Haddad/JRS)

My days in Tongogara pass in a blur of encounters that I am desperate to hold on to, to mull over in the weeks to come, an indelible print left on me. I meet Patrick, the former lecturer of economics who now manages our library, teaches adult classes, and writes poetry; Rose, who has moved her children all around Southern Africa in search of safety, and now teaches our cosmetology course; Leonard, with his desire to travel, his double Masters, love of Greek Classics, and fondness for quoting Latin texts. Then there was the lady who shouted at me because her ration from the World Food Programme was insufficient and, with a drought looming, she was worried about how to feed her family. I could go on.

It seems cruel that people are resigned to a life of waiting – at the whim of many bureaucracies – in a place that at first glance seems desolate. Yet, through people like Patrick, Rose, and Leonard, Tongogara comes to life. It thrives

on their presence. Their suffering is neither subdued nor denied yet it does not define them.

Every day nearly 2,000 children beat out a path of hope, traipsing back and forth to the primary and secondary schools, with their bags and books, their chatter and vivacity.

The 400 adults enrolled in vocational skills training exude a tenacity I can only admire. They are eager to learn a skill that will help them earn an income, remove them from dependency on aid, and recover the dignity and pride they lost somewhere en route across Africa.

The women, who travel 80km to the closest town to barter and trade goods so that they can provide for their families, are the strategists in the community. The fact that the neighbouring local communities depend on the refugee economy for support and survival is a testament to the innovation and success of livelihoods projects that deliver results. The refugees sell products they make, like hoes, wheelbarrows,

boxes, clothes, and basic furniture. And they deliver services like hairdressing, manicures, and pedicures – small everyday luxuries.

We, as JRS, strive to meet the needs of refugees in Tongogara by constantly engaging with them and delegating responsibility to community leaders. We run livelihoods and vocational skills programs in full cooperation with the community, under their leadership, with oversight by our staff. The secondary school is run by JRS in conjunction with the local Catholic Archdiocese and predominantly Zimbabwean staff who care deeply about their role in the lives of their students.

As we leave Tongogara, and I face the remnants of former farms, I wonder if that is what the future looks like for refugees – a barren expanse that stretches away endlessly. I ask myself: are we doing enough to change that barrenness, to cultivate something that thrives again in such a landscape? ●

A cry from the heart

The impact of education on the reality of the refugees does not come only from services for those directly affected. Education is necessary so that others may learn about this reality. The best teachers are the refugees themselves. Patrick Kwambi Kabeya lives in Tongogara camp in Zimbabwe. He was persecuted in his country, DRC, because he expressed his political opinions on the campus where he was a lecturer. He shares some thoughts with us.

It is usually intolerance of some sort that in the end drives refugees to take the drastic step of fleeing their country to seek asylum in another land. Unfortunately, all too often, they are greeted with intolerance there as well.

In some countries, the connotations surrounding the words 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' have mutated, and now evoke only distrust and scorn. In March and May 2015, xenophobic attacks occurred in South Africa, confirming once more the trends of intolerance against refugees.

It is not easy to wear the suit called 'refugee' or the dress called 'asylum seeker'. But unfortunately we don't have a choice. It is difficult to understand unless you are in our shoes. It gets worse when we must face people who are unable to see us the way we see ourselves.

Do you know why there were xenophobic attacks on refugees in South Africa? Because refugees are considered as intruders, because others believe that refugees are not human beings with rights. They think refugees are not equal to them.

I was very sorry when I saw images of the xenophobic attacks. I found myself ashamed of my status, and with the turbulent violence rising like a flood, the whole sad souvenir of my life as a refugee came back to me. I realised that we are nothing before the foolish hatred of the world.

I cried bitterly, mourning for myself, and for victims of xenophobia. I had nothing to help them with, no resources to stop the madness, so I decided to write. I wrote a compilation of poems. Each stanza, word, and letter is the expression of my opposition against the hurricane called xenophobia. Refugees are also human beings; we deserve respect and consideration. ●

Forget to forgive

*Weak, no strength
Dying was my choice
Companion of death
Cruel choice.*

*Forget to forgive
My mistake
Being a refugee
Dying on the street
Would you like to be
Like me?*

*I will not last
On the suburb
Beach of Durban
All disturbed
By a wicked Hooligan*

*The cheery mob
Happy like a fool
Claimed my soul
My sick body
Nobody
Could stop the fool
Nobody
Would rescue my soul*

*Forget to forgive
The fool fascist
Alive
I, dead, stoned
Naked, raped
On the street.*

Patrick Kwambi Kabeya

📷 Patrick (right) gives feedback to one of his students in an adult computer class. (Zerene Haddad/JRS)



Something to think about over a cup of coffee
Only half of all refugee children are enrolled in primary school
One in four refugees is estimated to be in secondary school
Just 1% of refugees reach tertiary education

Here at the JRS International Office in Rome, we love our coffee. As this edition of *Servir* goes to press, we are in Lent, a time in which one of the most common customs is fasting or "giving up something". We're not suggesting that you give up coffee. Instead we want to show how small daily efforts by many could make a big difference.

Let's imagine that everyone who reads *Servir* contributes the cost of one cup of coffee per day for one week. Or the cost of another treat. It might not seem like much in the light of the needs of millions of refugees.

Well, consider this. A \$25 school kit would allow a child in Maban, South Sudan, to attend primary school for a year. A year-long scholarship for a refugee pursuing a diploma in Dzaleka camp in Malawi costs \$550.

Through many small efforts, great things could become possible for refugees through the Mercy in Motion campaign. We hope to hear from you soon – but please finish your coffee first!

To find out more, please contact **Jill** at jill.drzewiecki@jrs.net

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