



Mission News

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI)

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Education for refugees: Putting mercy in motion



Internally displaced schoolgirls at Gendrassa Primary School in South Sudan.

Beatrice Gikonyo is the Regional Advocacy Officer for the Jesuit Refugee Service of Eastern Africa.

In recent years, the world has witnessed an increased displacement of hundreds of thousands of people due to conflicts going on in various countries. And while disruption to normal life, deaths and massive suffering are the most noticeable consequences of conflicts, equally grave is the loss of educational opportunities for affected populations.

Mercy in Motion campaign

Globally, more than 60 million people today are displaced from their homes with at least half of them being children. Therefore the need for education is great. In

response to the unveiling of the Holy Year of Mercy, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) decided to extend its educational support to refugees by launching the Global Education Initiative, to increase the number served in its educational projects from the current 120,000 to 220,000 by the year 2020 – an increase of 100,000.

In a private audience with JRS in November 2015, Pope Francis encouraged the initiative by saying that “to give a child a seat at school is the finest gift you can give.”

The Mercy in Motion campaign is the advocacy and fundraising platform for the Global Education Initiative. It

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The vision & mission of CJI

The vision of Canadian Jesuits International is a world of peace, justice and integrity of creation, transformed through active commitment and finding God in all things.

The mission of CJI is to love and to serve by working with people struggling for social justice and dignity in the world. Together with Jesuit and other partners, CJI responds in solidarity, through awareness-raising and advocacy in Canada and supporting partnerships in the Global South.

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A word from Jenny Cafiso, CJI Director

Education is a fundamental right of every human being. It is not an extra or a luxury. It is a right just like water, food and health. So says the United Nations, so say many governments, at least in words if not in action, and so says Pope Francis.

And so say the people, especially the poor. They say it with their feet. I have seen children walk for hours to go to school, which may not be anything more than a blackboard hanging from a tree branch. On my recent trip to Nepal, I saw children writing an exam sitting on the dirt floor.

At the launch of the Global Education Initiative by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), featured in the cover article, Pope Francis told us, “Offering an education is about much more than dispensing concepts. It is something which provides refugees with the wherewithal to progress beyond survival, to keep alive the flame of hope, to believe in the future and to make plans. To give a child a seat at school is the finest gift you can give.”

There is overwhelming evidence that higher levels of education are directly related to lower rates of infant mortality, lower rates of violence against women, lower levels of HIV infections, increased economic productivity. So why is it that there are still millions of children out of school? Why is it that some countries still have 75% illiteracy rates, especially among women?

Education is a priority area of work for the Jesuits. It is varied, contextually appropriate and multifaceted: from nursery school to post-secondary; formal and informal; academic and trades-oriented; for learning as well as for security, psychosocial well-being and spiritual growth; inside classrooms, outside, on the radio, over the internet. We are pleased in this newsletter to feature examples of this work from different places and to contribute in our small way to ensuring that everyone is guaranteed this fundamental human right.

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Education for refugees: Putting mercy in motion

aims to raise \$35 million to support the initiative over the next five years.

An investment in peace

Education is usually among the first casualties of war or conflict. Refugees' children are forced to cut short their studies, while others do not even have the opportunity to go to school. Entire generations often lose their right to education, which in turn limits their chances for integration and contribution to the host communities.

Similarly, with no education, those who eventually return home are limited in terms of what they can contribute to building their nations, and most importantly, to sustaining peace. For these reasons JRS has long considered education a life-saving intervention and recognizes it as a lasting contribution to long-term durable solutions to conflicts; it is an investment in peace.

Education within conflict

It is also notable that many conflicts today are taking longer and longer to resolve, with UNHCR (United Na-

tions High Commissioner on Refugees) statistics showing that people are spending an average of 17 years in exile! Whether displaced persons have reached another country – and at least for the time being are living in camps or amongst local host communities – or are still within their own countries living in camps for internally displaced persons, children are faced with many barriers to learning. These include a lack of schools, a lack of teachers, overcrowding in the few available schools, and language barriers.

Schools offer children protection from trafficking and forced recruitment by armed gangs. They also offer a sense of normalcy especially after going through the experience of war, and they impart important values such as peace, justice and reconciliation.

Undoubtedly, education helps restore human dignity while at the same time empowering uprooted people to take charge of their lives both in exile and upon returning home. In several places such as South Sudan, former refugees who benefited from education scholarships while in exile have gone back to help rebuild their country.

Through the Mercy in Motion campaign, JRS hopes to ensure that the right to education for thousands of displaced children and young people is restored and protected.

A version of this article by Beatrice Gikonyo first appeared in the Irish Jesuit Mission Office Newsletter. ■

L'Osservatore Romano



Pope Francis greets JRS staff, supporters and refugees at a private audience on 14 November 2015.



Beatrice Gikonyo

Headmistress Rose helps a young pupil at a JRS nursery school in Maban, South Sudan.



A.Wells/JRS-EA

Girls' education: Stepping out of the shadows

Shaperai Azizi* is a Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) teacher in Afghanistan

Like millions of other Afghan girls, I live in a village where education is not given much importance. The slight chances that exist are given mostly to men, and girls are deprived of these opportunities. My village is situated in the district of Guzara, and it has always been subject to threats from anti-government forces. The villagers are conservative, but my family is different from others, and always encouraged me and my sisters to go to school and to learn many things.

teacher, I teach the girls in my village. I give my best so that they can learn. I have enjoyed each and every one of my days in JRS, both as a student and as a teacher. But at first I didn't imagine how bad things would get later.

Everything was fine until an unknown gang in my village made threats against me. One evening, the gangsters dropped a letter at my door, threatening to kill me if I continued to work with JRS. For some days, it

pursue higher studies and to play a significant role in educating the other girls of my village.

I am grateful for my wonderful family that has supported me in the most difficult times of my life. And I am proud of JRS that has been a constant source of strength, support, inspiration and motivation. With JRS, I can improve my skills in English and develop leadership qualities to help others. I am proud to be a member of JRS and my ambition is



Afghan schoolgirls in a JRS classroom.

I started to go to school when I was seven. I was a bright student. When I was in grade 10, I attended a course conducted by JRS at a high school in the heart of Guzara, far away from my village. That was back in 2009. I studied English for almost two years, followed by a year in the JRS Access Plus Program, in which I was trained in teaching methodology. At present, as a JRS

was difficult for me to act normally. More than the threat to my own life, I was worried about the safety of my family. But as the saying goes, "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger." So I soon collected myself and came out with a stronger determination to continue my way. I knew that this was the work of close-minded people who didn't have the guts to face open-minded people. I paid no attention to the threats and decided to

to train all the students in my village and to help them attain a good position in their lives. In this way, I will contribute to the development of Afghanistan and the world.

**This is not the author's real name. Shaperai's story originally appeared under the title "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger," in Stepping Out of the Shadows, published by JRS South Asia. Reproduced with permission. ■*

ADDRESSING THE GENDER DISPARITY

- 67% of the 774 million illiterate people in the world are female, according to UNESCO.
- 74% of the population in Afghanistan is illiterate, but 88% of females are illiterate.
- 7,500 children and youth in Afghanistan are currently enrolled in JRS education programs. These programs are primarily for returning refugees and for internally displaced or marginalized groups – including girls, who lost a lot of ground under Taliban rule. About 80% of JRS students in Afghanistan are girls.
- Shaperai Azizi's story of a JRS student becoming a JRS teacher is just one of many wonderful accounts where a girl beneficiary becomes a society benefactor.

Education for people's health

Abdul Javar D. Esturco, MD, is an alumnus of the Ateneo de Zamboanga University School of Medicine (ADZU-SOM) in the Philippines.

ADZU is a Jesuit university in Western Mindanao, Philippines. In 1994, it opened a School of Medicine with an innovative community-focused curriculum. Social accountability, sustainability and accessibility by the poor underpin the students' training. Of the 350 graduates to date, 94% are still practising medicine in the Philippines, 70% within the region and 50% in remote rural areas – such as where Dr. Esturco works. CJI supports medical education at ADZU-SOM.

At around ten in the morning, an old man sought help due to his frequent hemoptysis and inability to sleep at night. My automatic initial diagnosis was pulmonary tuberculosis, and I was right.

This happened in my first month at Pangutaran District Hospital in Sulu, Philippines. I came here after graduating from ADZU-SOM in June 2013. To get here, it takes three to four hours by boat in calm waters from mainland Jolo. Some months, there are hardly any passenger trips due to immense waves and strong currents.

The old man hesitated when I advised hospital admission. Doctor-patient interactions here include discussion and negotiation and can be especially difficult when translating medical concepts into another dialect. I had to call an interpreter, and this made me feel inefficient. Eventually he agreed to be admitted but only after he could go home to inform his family. This was a gamble because I knew he might not come back. Later that day, however, he returned with his daughter, who explained that the main reason for his hesitation was financial.

On his second day in hospital, the old man's hemoptysis had decreased

and he slept at night. We had started TB-DOTS chemotherapy from day one. During my rounds, he asked if he could now go home as he felt better. Fortunately he agreed to stay a few days longer. Later, the old man's daughter invited me to visit their home. It was far and the trail was rough, but I was greeted there by the smile of the old man. He gladly told me of his weight gain and his plan to continue with the medications. He showed me his vegetable garden, and harvested some for me. We were both grateful for each other.

Given its history and current security threats, going to the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), particularly Sulu, had definitely made me think twice.

However, along with the personal risk came a wonderful opportunity to bring real change to the health of the people.

In 2014, I was appointed Municipal Health Officer of Pangutaran and Dr. Saylen Kuyong, another ADZU-SOM alumnus, also joined me in the district. Within a few months, we initiated numerous improvements, from revising simple forms to planning for sustainable health programs. Being like-minded physicians made collaboration easy. We lobbied for a maintenance and operation budget and fortunately the provincial government responded not only to us, but began providing a fixed monthly budget to all Rural Health Units in Sulu. Currently we are focused on renovating our TB-DOTS centre. We want to provide quality service with compassion. It is a high-impact strategy to increase TB case detection and cure rates, and hopefully to minimize cases similar to the old man's.

Our job in Pangutaran is still a work in progress; however, with the help of the Almighty and true collaboration with local communities, we may be unstoppable! ■

Dr. Abdul Javar Esturco examines a patient.



M.A. Ariza

Ugandan students ready for science experiments

Students at Ocer Campion Jesuit College (OCJC) in Gulu, Northern Uganda, no longer have to rely only on books and teachers to learn science today. Thanks to newly equipped laboratories at their school, they can now undertake experiments and test hypotheses themselves. Canadian Jesuits International supported the equipping of their physics lab and the positive results are already evident. Last year, OCJC's graduating class ranked first out of 70 schools in Gulu District and third out of 179 schools in Northern Uganda.

Ocer Campion Jesuit College was founded in 2010, following peace talks in Northern Uganda. This area had been ravaged over a 25-year period by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group. The LRA's activities caused major displacements of local populations and inevitable disruption of young people's education.

"Ocer" (which means "He is risen" in the local Acholi language) is the first Jesuit school in Uganda. It emphasizes peace and justice, and instills in its students a respect for the dignity of all people. Students are from diverse backgrounds; some are orphans or from single parent families while others are from poor families.

Canadian Jesuit and physicist Fr John Legge, who worked in Uganda for decades, spearheaded this project

to equip the new labs. He was ably assisted by Ojwang Geoffrey, the school's lab technician, and by Br Silas Kipkorir SJ, who is a chemistry teacher.



OCJC students with apparatus in the physics laboratory.

The importance of well-equipped labs was recently expressed by senior student Einstein Arnold Lugama: "Our physics, biology and chemistry laboratories have ... introduced me to new concepts which have broadened my understanding of science... Through our laboratories, I am now familiar with apparatus that are used in experiments and ... (that) increase our knowledge through observation and testing." ■

CJI in Good Friday Walk for Justice

"I am thirsty." These words of Jesus on the cross were the theme of the 2016 Ecumenical Good Friday Walk for Justice in downtown Toronto. The focus was on the life-giving importance of water and the right of all people to this gift from the Creator.

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) was invited to participate by leading one of the "stations" of the cross, at City Hall. We focused on the importance of water in Syria, where a multi-year drought and the use of water as a political lever and weapon of war have compounded the desperation of Syrian civilians.

CJI staff read quotations from Syrians, humanitarian workers, journalists, scientists and others familiar with, or suffering from, poor access to water in different parts of

Syria. A poem by Ibrahim Barakeh on the theme of water, entitled "Vague Destiny," was also read in Arabic and English. In the program for the walk, CJI shared what is being done in solidarity with the Jesuit Refugee Service in Syria and in neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. ■

CJI staff share quotes about water in Syria.



60 million forcibly displaced people: JRS director responds to massive challenge

On 12 April, the International Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Fr Tom Smolich SJ, spent a very full day in Toronto. It began with breakfast with Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) supporters and went on to include a morning meeting with Canadian colleagues working with refugees, a lunchtime visit to Romero House, TV and newspaper interviews in the afternoon, and finally a public talk in the evening. Fr Tom spoke on the topic “60 million refugees: A global challenge.” The event was co-sponsored by CJI, JRS Canada, and the Mary Ward Centre.

At the evening event, in addition to slides and a short video, participants heard of current needs and trends from the front lines of refugee work around the world. The needs today are greater

than ever and the vast numbers of refugees mean that all of us are affected in one way or another. Fr Tom illustrated the current situation by focusing on his recent personal experiences in three areas: Syrian refugees trying to get into Europe; Darfur Sudanese refugees still living in camps in Chad; and refugees from all over ending up in Bangkok, Thailand.

An integral part of Fr Tom’s presentation was our response to the global refugee crises. He noted how human it is to respond out of fear, sometimes even legitimate fear. But he emphasized this is something to fight against, that fear is not a good basis for making decisions. Instead, gospel values challenge us to respond

to refugees as Jesus would, with love and mercy and welcome.

Fr Tom highlighted the response of JRS to refugees around the world, and noted how important it is to offer hope through education. He explained that the Mercy in Motion campaign of JRS to support its new Global Education Initiative, is a response to Pope Francis’s declaration of a Holy Year of Mercy. The campaign aims to raise US\$35 million to educate an additional 100,000 refugees over the next five years.

For more on the visit, including Fr Tom’s news interview and a video of his talk, please visit www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca. ■



Public event audience hears about JRS’s response to refugees.

MERCY IN MOTION

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) was founded in 1980. It currently offers life-saving services to over 750,000 refugees and forcibly displaced people in 45 countries around the world. Education has always been the cornerstone of the JRS mission.

Approximately 50% of refugees have access to primary education. That number drops to 25% for secondary education, and only 1% for higher education. This is a global reality that JRS is seeking to change through its Mercy in Motion (MiM) campaign, which was launched in December 2015 at the beginning of the Holy Year of Mercy.

At an audience with JRS in November 2015, Pope Francis spoke

to the real value of this campaign: “Behind these statistics are people, each of them with a name, a face, a story, an inalienable dignity which is theirs as a child of God.... Offering an education ... provides refugees with the wherewithal to progress beyond survival, to keep alive the flame of hope, to believe in the future and to make plans.”

Canadian Jesuits International supports MiM and has contributed to the education work of JRS in the following countries: Colombia, Haiti, Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

For more information, please visit www.mercy-in-motion.org and www.jrs.net.

To donate to the MiM campaign, please go to www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/to-donate.



Contest – name our newsletter!

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) has been publishing a newsletter for 50 years! Beginning in 1966, the early newsletters were published under the name *Canadian Jesuit Missions* and then, in 1995, the name was changed to *Mission News*.

This year, we are looking for a new name for the newsletter and are launching a contest to get suggestions from you – our readers, supporters, partners, students, friends, Jesuits ... We are hoping for a name that reflects our work based on principles of solidarity and reciprocity with partners in the Global South and our vision of a world of peace, justice and integrity of creation.

The new name will replace the “Mission News” name only; the subtitle is likely to be “Newsletter of Canadian Jesuits International.” The contest runs until 15 October 2016. All entries will be considered. A final decision drawn from a short list will be made by the Board of Trustees at their November 2016 meeting.

For contest rules and details – including the prize! – please go to www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/2016/05/19/newsletter-name-contest. ■

ECUADOR EARTHQUAKE

CJI is responding to the request from the Jesuits in Ecuador to help victims of the devastating earthquake that struck the country on 16 April. Priorities for assistance include water, food, medicine, hygiene kits, shelter and the re-opening of schools for children.

Please go to www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca for more information and to donate. Thank you!

PUT MERCY IN MOTION!

Please support CJI – your contribution will bring hope to thousands of refugee children and youth who will benefit from the Global Education Initiative of the Jesuit Refugee Service.

Please give generously by making a one-time or a regular monthly donation.

All donations are tax deductible. All personal information is held in accordance with Canadian Government Privacy Policy.



Delegates of the two Canadian Jesuit provinces in the Dominican Republic.

Forging solidarity links

From 4-8 April, over 100 people working in Jesuit social and international ministries in Canada, the United States, the Caribbean and some Latin American countries gathered in the Dominican Republic to reflect on key social and economic issues facing our societies at this time and to discern a common response.

The gathering focused on four topics: migration, social and economic inequality and exclusion, extraction of natural and mineral resources, and violence. Participants sought to understand each of these issues from the perspective of those who are excluded. They also looked at how these issues are interrelated and were reminded of how they affect the lives of those who fight for justice, as in the brutal murder just a few weeks earlier of environmental activist Bertha Cáceres in Honduras.

Fr Paxti Álvarez SJ of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat in Rome helped the gathering to make global connections. The meeting sought to identify how to work together as Jesuit institutions in solidarity with the poor in the Americas, north and south. ■

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Thank you for your support!