

# BRIDGING BORDERS



Youth attending a workshop of the Ignatian Youth Network in Barrancabermeja, Colombia show off their illustration of the history of the region, the problems their generation faces and the solutions they propose.

Isaac Garcia/JRS, Colombia

## THE POWER OF OUR LAND

Leidy Marcela Guevara Silva, Bayron José Tafur Barbosa and Julián Andrés Sánchez Botina are young men and women who are members of Jóvenes Generarte in Magdalena Medio, Colombia.

If this land could talk, it would tell many stories, some sweet, others bitter; some in vibrant colors, others dark; some harsh, others gentle; some fresh, others so old that their earthy fragrance disperses through the air. If

Colombia could speak, her stories would be endless. In her profound silence, we become her voice, the voice of young Colombia, born again from her ashes, becoming garments of hope.

The same sun shines over the entire beautiful land of Colombia, but the dawns are not the same, nor are the sunsets equal for everyone, because different eyes see them, different bodies live them. At dawn, the children of the sun wake up,

# A WORD FROM **JENNY CAFISO** | CJ I DIRECTOR



It is commonplace to say that the future belongs to the youth. Yet it is not so common to see policies and structures, or even a culture, that would make it possible for youth to shape the future. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the Global South.

Youth form more than half of the population in the Global South, yet they have little or no access to quality education; have few if any job opportunities; are often forced into child labour, work as domestic servants, often abused, trafficked and exposed to gender based violence; and are often excluded from any decision making structure. They face a future marked by environmental degradation and societal conflict with no adequate tools to combat them. The situation is even more dramatic for girls and young women.

More than half of Haiti's population is under the age of 24 years. This should translate into huge potential for the country, yet over 35% of girls over six never go to school. Less than 1% of youth go to university.

Thousands of young people risk their lives in boats across the Mediterranean or in caravans from Central America, telling stories of despair and the search for a better future.

The Society of Jesus chose as one of its four Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP)

*"Journeying with youth – accompanying young people in the creation of a hope filled future."* The youth who have contributed to this issue of *Bridging Borders* are our partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We can journey with them only if we are also committed to the other three preferences: walking with the excluded, caring for the whole of creation and *our common home* and showing the way to God. Our youth partners embody the four UAPs.

They tell us not only of their struggles, but of their dreams of peace, of rebuilding after war, of political participation and a just economy. They hope for a more just world where everyone can learn to read and write regardless of gender and where people earn fair wages. They speak of the need for critical thinking and leadership skills and of empowerment.

Journeying with youth calls for a strong education system that guarantees access to quality education for all by increasing public expenditure. It means developing national youth policies to foster youth and adolescent rights, guarantee child protection, promote community life and youth leadership, improve national standards on employment and promote citizenship and participation.

We seek to listen to the voices of youth both in Canada and the Global South through the Youth Advocacy Symposium in October. We will accompany them, as they, in the words of the Colombian youth in our cover article, "transform history into a hopeful future."

## The **vision** & **mission** of CJ I

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 CJ I 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, CJ I responds in solidarity, through awareness-raising and advocacy in Canada and supporting partnerships in the Global South.

To learn more about Canadian Jesuits International or to make a donation, please contact us at:

70 Saint Mary Street  
Toronto, ON M5S 1J3

Tel: 416.944.8727  
(while working remotely)

Toll Free (within Canada & USA)  
1.800.448.2148

Email: [cji@jesuits.ca](mailto:cji@jesuits.ca)

**JENNY CAFISO**  
Director

**VICTOR REYES**  
Editor

**STEFANO MAERO**  
Design

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some are farmers cultivating life in the fields; others are youth, walking great distances to school, sweaty and in a hurry; some are women already longing for their homeward return at sunset; others are victims of violence who still feel in their skin and in their hearts the absence of their loved ones, taken away by war, they fight to break the silence surrounding the hidden horrors that have destroyed families; others are in the pinnacle of power, others are crushed under the worst oppression. We are there, in the crossfire of extremes, as newborn souls, the heirs of the land, young people who feel history with our own hands and our own ideas, transforming it into a hopeful future.

A people led by youth rise up with strength against tyranny, tired of centuries of being oppressed by their self-proclaimed masters, fighting in vain for a dignified life. Now they resist war and proclaim peace, sowing a culture that empowers youth and that youth empower. They struggle and they sing and demarcate a before and an after.

Rainforests that stretched out for kilometres in living green; imposing, cloud-capped mountains that adorned the face of the earth; birds travelling in flocks, northbound, looking for rest; condor families that rested on valleys of palm trees that scraped the sky; the enormous rivers that welled up from the horizon and tumbled down the mountains; the sunsets that painted yellow, red and blue the canvas of the sky... the one and only sky that painted itself with these hues of the hidden homeland where we found ourselves.

Some paths in Colombia are dangerous, dark, difficult to navigate, but, when we walk together, planting our feet forward with hope, our steps transform and blaze a new horizon. Our voices strong in a single cry, the melodies of our instruments touching hearts, the images we paint with the colours of our flag, the art we are and the culture that clothes us, all this becomes the morning sun for the resistance born in our land and the memory that is our identity.

Colombia is not a country of marvels, but we are the generation that does not hesitate to journey and speak through our art. We provide more answers than questions. Colombia needs us to be her voice to sing the verses of hope. Beloved Colombia, we are your dear ones, and our heart burns because inside, there lives the inextinguishable fire of resistance.

*We would like to thank Greg Kennedy SJ for translating the article from Spanish to English.*

In 1964, Colombia was engulfed in a civil war that lasted for over 50 years and displaced millions of people. A historic peace agreement between the government and the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) was signed in 2016, but violence and strife continue to persist. Peace has yet to become a reality for millions of people. In recent years, Colombia has also faced the challenge of hosting and integrating 1.8 million forcibly displaced Venezuelans, most of whom are living in precarious conditions.

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Colombia has been accompanying forcibly displaced people (FDPs) and local host communities for over 25 years. Their work focuses on facilitating the integration of FDPs by strengthening relationships between them and host populations. The young men and women that JRS have been accompanying have formed Jóvenes Generarte, a youth movement that uses art to express their hopes and dreams for their country and inspire others to help build a more just future for all.

📷 Youth at a workshop of the Ignatian Youth Network in Barrancabermeja, Colombia discuss issues young people face in the area.



Isaac García/JRS Colombia

# YOUTH AND EDUCATION: KEYS TO BUILDING A NATION

Nidhi Chick Baraik belongs to a scheduled tribe and tea garden family in Darjeeling, India. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in North Bengal University.

The youth is the hope of the future. We envision a world where our dreams can be realized to create a more just society. We work hard to achieve our goals, yet, there are barriers that stand in our way – especially if you are poor and live in the Global South.

I live in India where COVID-19 has affected millions of people: over 31 million confirmed cases and 413,000 deaths as of mid-July. COVID-19 is more than a health issue; it is also an economic and cultural one.

When the second wave hit India last April, the government shut down schools and banned student gatherings. I have seen how these restrictions disproportionately affected the poor. Online learning is not an option for students in the tea gardens because they have no access to computers or smart phones. The government tried to address the issue by cancelling exams and moving everyone up the next grade. However, this only created a dearth of knowledge among youth.

Quality education was already inaccessible for poor people before COVID-19. Tuition fees are just one barrier. Dalits and Adivasis, the most marginalized people in the country, have the right to subsidized education. However, most are unable to go to school because they do not possess valid caste certificates, a prerequisite for accessing their rights. In 2018, 17% of youth in India dropped out before finishing secondary school. Most end up working because they need to support their families.

It is easy to lose hope, yet we persevere. With the help of organizations like Human Life Development and Research Centre (HLDRC), poor and marginalized youth can build a bright future for themselves and their communities. HLDRC provides vocational training in computer hardware, sewing, retail management and nursing and help with employment through a placement program.

HLDRC also conducts awareness and information programs. They teach us about caste certificates and

how to apply for them. Their workshops also provide opportunities for youth to develop self-confidence, critical thinking and leadership skills. I participated in a right to food campaign and learned that working collectively, we are more empowered; those in power are more likely to listen to our united voice!

The challenge for youth now is to overcome roadblocks to education due to COVID-19. HLDRC continues to help. While schools remain closed, it has opened up study centres to tutor 1,000 students who have no access to online learning. However, this is not enough.

The government and private sector must address the pandemic more effectively. They must also invest resources into making education accessible for everyone. This includes offering incentives to enable poor youth to go back to school again; enacting policies that help compensate for the loss of education during the pandemic; and lifting the ban on student gatherings to allow us to come together with one voice.

Education is key not only for the development of an individual but for building a nation.

📷 Students at a HLDRC study centre at the Manja Tea Garden, Darjeeling district, celebrate World Environment Day.



HLDRC

# YOUTH IN SOUTH SUDAN: OF HOPES, DREAMS AND LEADING THE WAY INTO THE FUTURE

South Sudan is Africa's youngest nation. It has been mired in violent conflict for several decades, continuing even after gaining independence from Sudan in 2011.

I am Angelina Ayen Majak. I am 22 years old. I am South Sudanese. I am a young woman who has great passion to bring hope and lead South Sudan into a bright future.

I graduated from Loreto Rumbek Girls' Secondary School, and I have been inspired by the maxim of my school, "women of courage." It was a privilege to study there as there are very few good secondary schools in South Sudan where only 1.3% of girls remain in school by the time they reach the age of 16.

Being a woman of courage, I joined an intensive course in basic solar water pump installation and maintenance and livelihood business skills at the Jesuit-run St Peter Claver Ecological Training Centre in Rumbek. In South Sudan, women are discouraged from taking courses that are seen to be fit for men only. It was a challenging academic task, but through the course, I realized that I am capable of doing what men do. I was not worried about what the men would say about me. I finished the course last June and the training empowered me to work confidently on solar water pumps, solar panels, batteries, network connections, etc. Now I can make a positive contribution to the community.

Life is difficult in South Sudan. I live in a country where government services and social welfare are severely lacking; the average



Angelina prepares to go to work outside Radio Good News, Rumbek, South Sudan.

inflation rate for the past 3 years has been 58%; and 2.2 million children, mostly girls, are out of school. There is gender inequality, lack of freedom of expression, hunger, inter-communal conflicts, displacement and migration.

Together with other youth, I dream of a South Sudan with peace and harmony and the capacity to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by continuous wars. We dream of a country that practices political fairness and sound economics. We hope for a more just world where everyone can learn to read and write regardless of gender; where work opportunities abound; and where people earn fair wages.

Youth play a crucial role in making this happen. We need to be involved

in political and cultural change. By serving in government, we can promote rights for all and hold veteran members of parliament accountable for their actions. We can lead in using online and digital platforms to nurture and advance interaction, education and cultural diversity. I encourage my fellow youth to volunteer: as teachers, as sports ambassadors and as advocates for our cultural and traditional beliefs.

In my country, one needs to have strong will power, courage and determination to succeed. Through my example and the work that I do, I hope to inspire and empower other youth. In fostering an environment that allows youth to reach for their own hopes and dreams, we enable them to change the world.

## YOUTH **ADVOCACY** SYMPOSIUM: **SOLIDARITY IN A COVID-19** WORLD

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI) will hold an online advocacy symposium for secondary and post-secondary students on October 23-24, with the theme “Solidarity in a COVID-19 world.” It will focus on 4 sub-themes: the pandemic and its impact on forcible displacement and migration; resource extraction and human rights; ecological justice and integral ecology; and inequality and COVID-19. Speakers will include youth leaders; CJI’s partners from the Global South; Jesuits; and leaders of Indigenous communities. The event will also give participants an opportunity to learn, network and build relationships with one another. In addition, the attendees

can learn about the work of CJI and its partners through online booths, videos and interactive displays.

This year’s event is the second advocacy symposium hosted by CJI and follows the success of the first one held in Ottawa in February 2020.

For more information and a complete list of speakers, sessions and workshops, please visit:  
<https://cjadvocacyvfairs.com>

📷 Advocacy Symposium banner.

Main image (vaccination): Marvin Mwaura/JCAM

## VACCINE **EQUITY** WEBINAR

CJI hosted a webinar on vaccine equity last June 15. “Leave no one behind: Vaccine equity in the Global South” brought together 4 experts from different parts of the world to talk about the contrasting realities faced by people in the Global North and South on vaccine access. Fr Charles Chilufya SJ (Coordinator, Africa Task Force of the Vatican COVID-19 Commission, Kenya), Dr Sunita Narain (Director-General, Centre for Science and Environment, India), Dr Katrina Plamondon (Co-chair, Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research’s University Advisory Council, Canada) and Dr Jeffrey Sachs (Professor, author, and advisor to governments and

the United Nations, USA) discussed how ensuring fair and equal access to vaccines for everyone is not only ethical, but is necessary to control a global pandemic. The speakers spoke in support of a proposed waiver on intellectual property rights on vaccines at the World Trade Organization to help poor countries get access to and even produce their own vaccines. Finally, they outlined actions we can all take to ensure that access to the vaccine

bridges the inequality gap between North and South.

To learn more and to register:  
[canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/vaccine-equity/](https://canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/vaccine-equity/)

📷 Vaccine equity webinar poster.

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To watch the webinar recording, please visit:

📄 <https://canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/vaccine-equity/>

## REST IN PEACE, FR STAN SWAMY

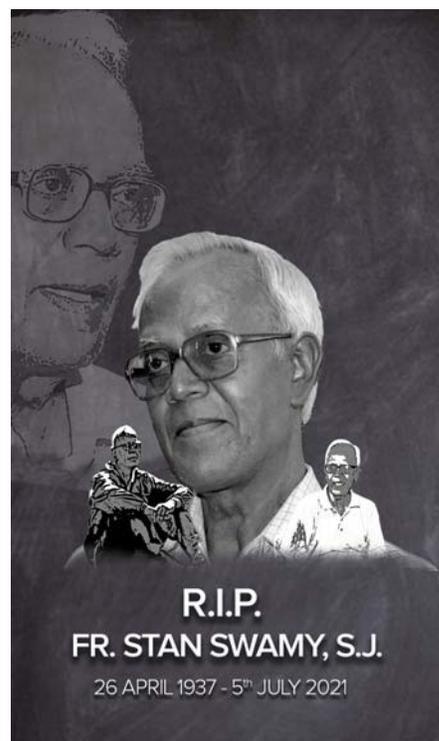
Fr Stan Swamy SJ passed away on July 5, 2021. For 50 years, he worked tirelessly for poor and marginalized communities of India, especially for the recognition of the rights of the Adivasis. Fr Stan was incarcerated for 9 months on unsubstantiated charges of links to Maoist forces. He suffered from Parkinson's disease and in spite of this, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) special sessions court

refused to grant him bail. He was finally transferred to a hospital after contracting COVID-19.

Fr Stan's life and death has inspired a new generation of advocates who continue to fight for truth and justice. They will stand up for the truth, fight for marginalized people and continue to dedicate their lives in the pursuit of a just and equal society. As we remember Fr Stan, let us not forget the 15 other human rights defenders who have been detained for the same reason as Fr Stan and continue to languish in prison.

To learn more, please visit

<https://canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/stand-with-stan/>



## PAN-AMAZON PARTNERS TELL THEIR STORY

Last May 15, CJI brought together its partners from the Pan-Amazon region and supporters in Canada for an online gathering on the *Pan-Amazon Inter-cultural and Bilingual Education Program: Care for our Common Home*. CJI friend and supporter Vimla Martinez de Hoz was instrumental in organizing this event as the project is very dear to her and her family. Guest speakers Irma Mariño Vargas of Fe y Alegría Peru and Fr Valerio Sartor SJ from Servicio Jesuita a la Panamazonía (SJPAM) talked about the education work that is touching and transforming many lives in the region.

To watch the recording, please visit:

<https://bit.ly/3ilMxBS>

## COVID-19 APPEAL

Thank you to all our supporters and friends who responded generously to CJI's appeal to help people severely impacted by the second wave of the pandemic in India.

We were able to send \$250,000 to our Jesuit partners in India, including those in the Darjeeling Province. This greatly helped their efforts to mitigate the deadly impact of the second wave by providing shelter and care for COVID-19 patients unable

to access hospitals; dispensing medical supplies and relief kits to those in need; making vaccines accessible to poor and marginalized people; ensuring testing and treatment in isolated rural areas; raising awareness on COVID-19 safety at the community level and online; and providing online counseling services.

We ask that you continue to keep our partners in India and the communities they serve in your prayers.

## FALL CAMPAIGN

Join in CJI's various Fall campaign educational events culminating on an online Advent/Christmas

concert on November 30, 2021! The theme of our campaign this year is *Solidarity in a COVID-19 world*.

Please visit our website for details in the coming weeks:

<https://canadianjesuitsinternational.ca>

## OUR FRIENDS SPEAK: RUNNING ALONGSIDE OUR YOUTH

My journey with the Jesuits started in India with a dear family friend, Fr Frederick Sopena SJ, who showed me what it means to love the poor. It continued through my education at Jesuit universities in India and the US. I never imagined that I would be reunited with a Jesuit organization when our beloved son Julian passed away suddenly in 2017. My husband, Diego, and I wanted Julian's legacy to live on through the education of others as he excelled in academics. The Holy Spirit put angels in my path to make this happen. My pastor introduced me to a parishioner who works at the Community Foundation of Mississauga; she helped us start the "Jesus Cares Memorial Fund" in honour of Julian. She later introduced me to Jenny Cafiso, Executive Director of CJI. That is what started us on this journey with CJI, supporting the *Pan-Amazon Intercultural and Bilingual Education Program* which supports education of children in the Amazon in their own language and with a focus on ecology and the care of "our common home." I feel blessed that the Holy Spirit has kept me close to the Jesuits.



📷 The Martinez de Hoz family (from L to R): Julian, Vimla, Diego (back), Justin and Jesica.

"Youth as hope for the future" is Pope Francis's invitation to the youth to keep "running the race before them." Youth can't do it alone; they need us to run alongside them. We need them as much as they need us.

*Vimla Martinez de Hoz is a Child Protection Worker at Peel Children's Aid in Mississauga. She is married, with three children, two on earth and one in heaven. She is currently doing her Masters in Pastoral Studies at Loyola University in New Orleans.*



## THANK YOU, ELIZABETH!

Elizabeth McIsaac will be stepping down from her role as chair of CJI's Board of Trustees on September 2021. We thank her for providing great

leadership and vision as chair and as a member of the board for the last 6 years (Oct 2015 – Oct 2021). We know we will miss her.

## HELP BUILD A JUST FUTURE FOR YOUTH

Our Jesuits partners journey with youth to help them build a just and hopeful future for themselves and their communities. We ask that you walk alongside them.

Please **give generously** by making a one-time donation, a **regular monthly donation** or a bequest in your will.

As we go to press, an **earthquake** has struck **Haiti**. Please support our partners in Haiti. Please visit our website for more details:

 [canadianjesuitsinternational.ca](https://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca)

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