



JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
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cover photo

Somali refugees in Addis Ababa
(Angela Hellmuth/JRS)

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The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
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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acronyms frequently used in this issue:

CAR	Central African Republic
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
IDPs	Internally displaced people
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The JRS International Office has two regular publications: Dispatches, a twice monthly email bulletin with refugee news briefings and JRS project updates, and Servir, a magazine issued three times a year. Both are free-of-charge and available in English, Spanish, French and Italian. To receive Dispatches and Servir, please subscribe through the JRS website:
<http://www.jrs.net/lists/manage.php>



© Peter Balleis SJ (left) chatting with Clément, a JRS worker in Guéréda, Chad.

A bare, shabby room, furnished only with mats, is the new home of a family of refugees in Addis Ababa, featured on the cover of this report. Nowadays, nearly half of the world's refugees live in urban areas, no longer in camps familiar to our imagination. In cities and towns, refugees and other forcibly displaced people are virtually 'invisible'. They tend to keep a low profile, frequently living in isolation and without support. Many do not have valid documents and do not enjoy any protection. Often unable to work legally, the jobs they find are usually poorly paid and they risk exploitation. It's also difficult for them to get access to services. To make matters worse, urban refugees face xenophobia and discrimination.

In this report, we take a closer look at JRS projects in urban settings, in cities as diverse as Bogotá, Phnom Penh, Johannesburg, Nairobi, Rome and Amman, to mention a few. Accompanying forcibly displaced people in the city means visiting them at home, getting to know and attending to their multiple unmet needs, including help to get documentation, food, access to healthcare, education, and cash to pay the rent. It means creating safe opportunities for them to meet, for children and teenagers to play and study together, instead of spending all the time in their small, often overcrowded homes.

By serving in urban areas, JRS is following in the footsteps of the founder of the Jesuit order. In 1538, the fierce winter in Italy brought famine, disease and death. Impoverished people took refuge in Rome but very few found shelter. Ignatius of Loyola and his companions opened the doors of their home. They begged for food and firewood and went out in search of the homeless to take them in and care for them. Within a year, they were looking after 3,000 displaced people. In the same place, in 1980, Pedro Arrupe SJ, the founder of JRS, set up Centro Astalli to reach out to hundreds of Ethiopian refugees, a service which continues to this day for people from all over the world.

Our involvement in urban areas is highlighted in this report alongside many other services in camps, in remote rural areas, in detention. Wherever forcibly displaced people are forgotten and vulnerable, JRS accompanies and serves them, and advocates their cause. This report is also an expression of our gratitude to partner organisations, donors and friends for their generous support, and to those working with us for their untiring service.

Peter Balleis SJ

JRS International Director

where we work

At least 46 million people are forcibly displaced across the world. This overview presents the estimated numbers in countries where JRS is at work. In all cases but two*, they pertain to the beginning of 2009 and are taken from the 2008 Statistical Yearbook published by UNHCR. They include refugees, people in refugee-like situations, asylum seekers, returnees, IDPs assisted by UNHCR, stateless persons and others of concern to UNHCR, by country of asylum. In some cases these statistics changed dramatically throughout 2009, with large-scale movements of people either fleeing or returning home.

North America

United States of America	348,776
	380,000 detainees*
Canada	227,853

Latin America & the Caribbean

Colombia	3,000,294
Dominican Republic	500,000 - 800,000 migrants*
Ecuador	135,317
Panama	17,515
Venezuela	213,097

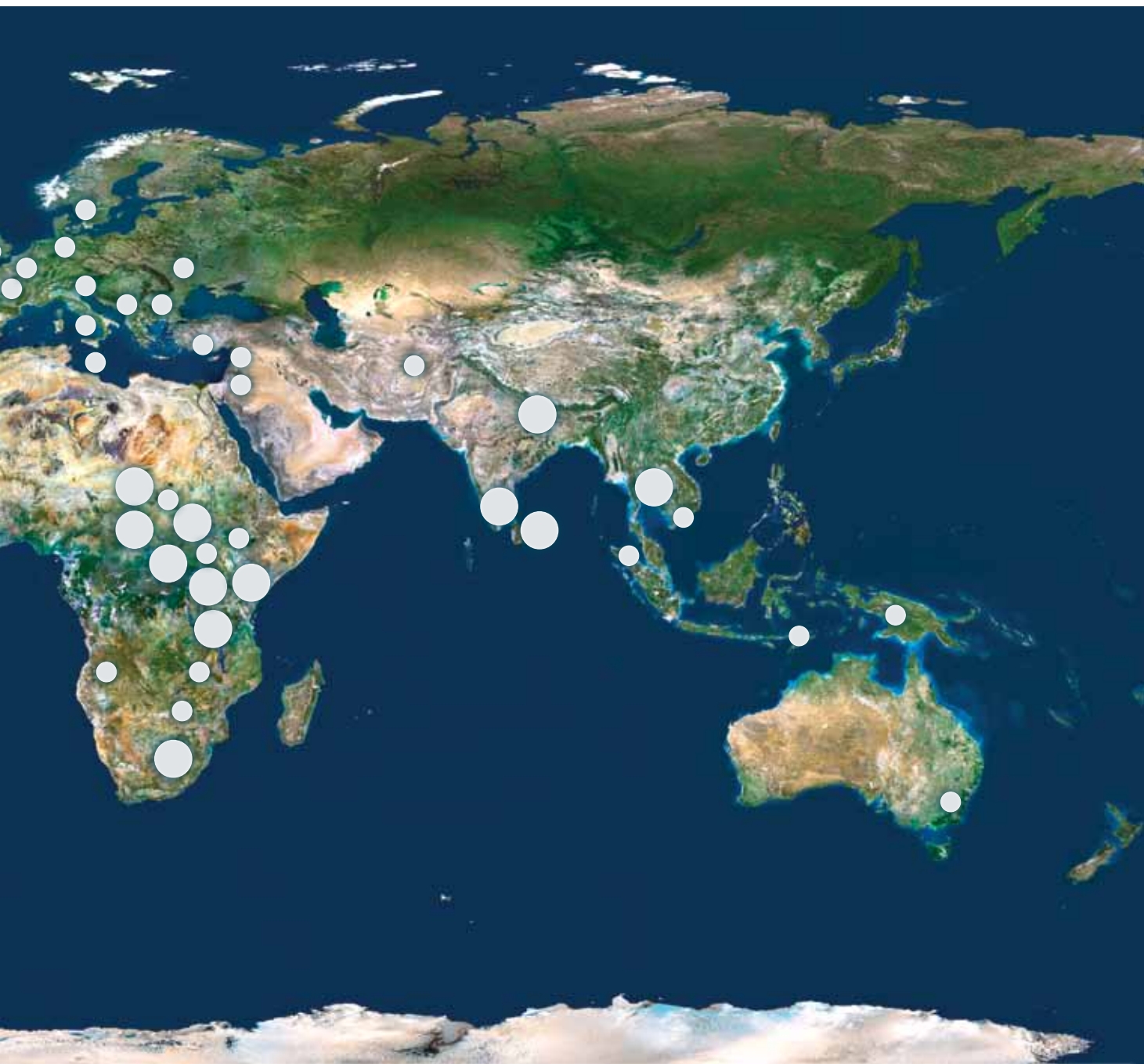
Europe

Belgium	31,837
France	203,708
Germany	647,852
Ireland	14,342
Italy	47,783
Malta	5,562

Morocco	1,235
Portugal	676
Romania	2,152
Slovenia	4,442
Sweden	107,376
Ukraine	64,858
United Kingdom	306,702
Western Balkans	
Bosnia Herzegovina	194,448
Croatia	33,943
Macedonia	2,823
Serbia	341,083

Eastern Africa

Ethiopia	85,417
Kenya	1,180,088
Sudan	1,499,683
Uganda	1,627,479

**Great Lakes**

Burundi	221,751
DRC	1,669,323
Rwanda	67,204

Southern Africa

Angola	28,947
Malawi	10,716
South Africa	270,671
Zambia	83,542
Zimbabwe	3,998

West Africa

Burkina Faso	1,161
Central African Republic	205,901
Chad	539,312
Côte d'Ivoire	734,205

Middle East

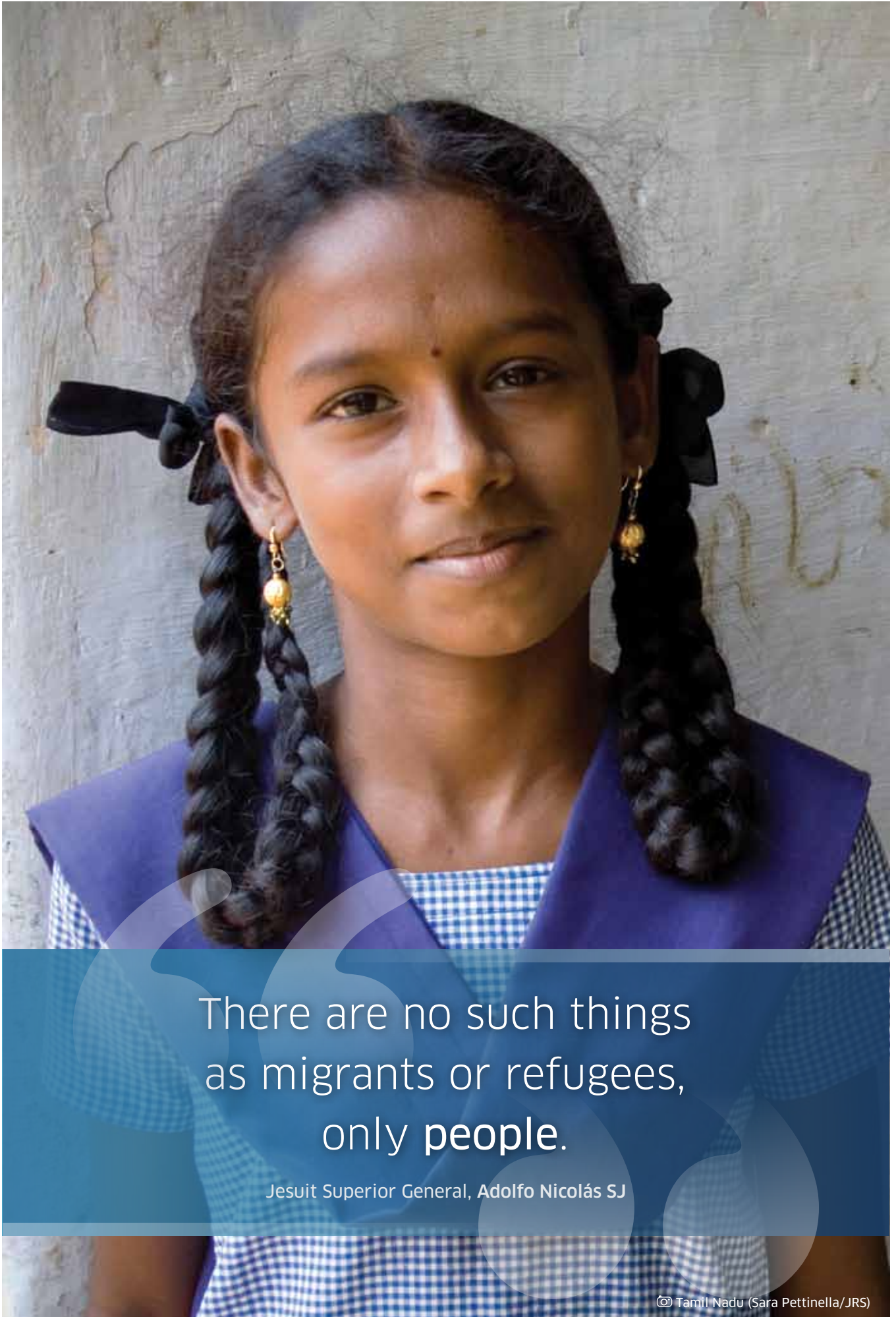
Jordan	501,099
Syria	1,407,949

Asia Pacific

Australia	23,078
Cambodia	225
Indonesia	726
Papua New Guinea	10,013
Singapore	10
Thailand	3,625,510
Timor-Leste	15,877

South Asia

Afghanistan	515,659
India	188,328
Nepal	925,873
Sri Lanka	528,001



There are no such things
as migrants or refugees,
only **people**.

Jesuit Superior General, Adolfo Nicolás SJ

© Tamil Nadu (Sara Pettinella/JRS)



📷 Listening intently: the urban refugee programme in Nairobi. (Angela Hellmuth/JRS)

Building relationships

Frido Pflueger SJ, Director, JRS Eastern Africa

During my field visits in the region I often meet refugees who ask for special financial support. Normally I have to tell them that this is not possible but we talk about their problems and they never seem disappointed. “Father, you could not solve my problem, but you have spent time with me. Thank you for listening.” A Somali refugee said JRS staff at our office addressed her by name. This made her feel welcomed and accepted; elsewhere she had been referred to merely as a number. Another woman, a Congolese, told one of our pastoral workers: “In most offices, people look at their computer screens when talking to me, but you look at my face.”

Our work is often about building relationships. This reflects the intention of our founder, Pedro Arrupe SJ, who stressed that the way ahead for JRS was to place special emphasis on *being with* rather than *doing for*. Once all material assistance has been provided, it is the personal relationship that makes a difference and encourages our people to continue being committed to those we serve. There, we find the meaning of our work.

At a glance

	Ethiopia	Kenya	Sudan	Uganda
Community centre	969			
Education		259	59,636	961
Emergency aid	2,995	3,347		5,265
Pastoral			5,146	
Peace-building			6,855	5,978
Social services		8,755		3,436

JRS Eastern Africa ran its largest projects in [Southern Sudan](#), supporting returnees and IDPs to rebuild their country after more than two decades of civil war. With the help of a volunteer architect from Brazil, the school construction programme was a highlight in 2009: 33 classrooms, 25 latrine blocks, a science laboratory, a girls' dormitory and two school offices were built.

In northern [Sudan](#), JRS worked closely with community groups and Parent Teacher Associations to provide support to pre-schools and primary schools in Mellit, Darfur, and popular adult literacy classes and lifeskills training for women.

In Kitgum District, northern [Uganda](#), JRS accompanied people who had moved from IDP camps back to their home villages. Activities included community outreach, psychosocial support, adult literacy, peace-building and training in modern agricultural techniques. In Kampala, JRS continued to give emergency support to newly arrived asylum seekers, mostly Congolese, and to offer English classes to promote integration.

JRS [Kenya's](#) Nairobi project supported newly arrived asylum seekers and vulnerable refugees. The thriving Mikono shop provided an outlet for crafts made by 70 artists. In Kakuma camp, north-western Kenya, long-running JRS services included a Safe Haven for survivors of gender-based violence and educational support for children with special needs. On 17 December 2009, the Jesuit Father General, Adolfo Nicolás SJ, visited Kakuma camp to meet the JRS team and refugees.

In Addis Ababa too, newly arrived asylum seekers received emergency assistance from JRS [Ethiopia](#). Refugees in the city gathered at the community centre, an established meeting place, for companionship, music and sports, English and computer classes, and to use the library and internet café.

Kenya

Someone who really cares

At JRS, 22-year old Nadifa found someone to listen to her story:

I left Somalia not because of war but because of personal problems. We used to live on our own property in Mogadishu. My uncle, a doctor, taught me English. One day a man to whom my father owed money came, he killed my uncle, dragged me away and locked me in a dark room. Sometimes he raped me or stubbed out his cigarettes on my arm. After a while I began to think that maybe I was supposed to live like this. I lost hope. Once I tried to escape but he found me and burnt half my body. A week passed before I got treatment. It was so painful that I screamed and cried until my voice disappeared and my tears finished.

I gave birth to two boys and also had a daughter who stayed with my mother. After two years of captivity I managed to escape with the help of neighbours. A car picked us up at night and we headed for the Kenyan border. I left the house with nothing. I arrived in Nairobi in September 2009. Pregnant again, I spent the nights sleeping on the street and fed my two little boys with water since I couldn't afford milk. A Somali lady found me there and invited me to stay with her. She gave me food and clothes and still shares her house with me and my children. She introduced me to other people who were going to the UNHCR office. In a publication for refugees and asylum seekers, I read about JRS.

When I went to the JRS office I thought that perhaps nobody would listen. A JRS worker took me aside and asked about my situation. I didn't know where to start; I was exhausted, hungry and tired. "How can I help you?" she asked after listening. She gave me bread and money and promised to call me. We talked many times after that and I realised that she really cared. So many people had lied or treated me badly but she was like a mother to me. I was so happy when she arranged for me to receive food assistance on a regular basis. To have food is the most important thing especially when you have children.

I am happy here and try not to think of the past. Whenever memories come back, I take a deep breath and remember that God is there for me.



© Home to urban refugees in Nairobi. (Angela H. Smith/JRS)

Ethiopia

I came with empty hands...

Charles shares his story of life in the city:

In 2005, I fled DRC with my wife and three children because of the civil war. It took us weeks to reach the Ethiopian border after crossing Uganda and Kenya. When we reached Addis Ababa, we were weak, our clothes tattered. We applied for asylum. For the next few days we lived on the street, sleeping on hotel porches and eating scraps. A young Ethiopian took us to the police and explained our situation. After interviewing us for hours, security officials directed us to JRS, telling us we would find help there. At the JRS office, a man welcomed us and gave us advice on how to adjust to life in Addis, explaining where different sorts of assistance were available, how to rent accommodation and how to use the money given to us as emergency aid. That very day, we hired a room near the JRS-run community centre. Shortly afterwards, we were granted urban refugee status by the government; this allowed us to enrol with UNHCR and to receive assistance.

At the community centre, we met refugees from DRC, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Burundi. It was consoling to hear people speak our mother tongue after a long time. I liked the fact that people from diverse cultures gathered to chat, take part in sports, learn languages, sing or play music together. We all shared the pain of being forcibly displaced. I joined a band that performed music in my language. Finding it therapeutic, I was motivated to learn how to play the guitar. This was the first course I attended at the centre; I soon signed up for computer and English classes and received certificates for both. The next step was a vocational skills training programme. I chose videography as my subject. After graduating, I used my old camera to start a small business that generates some income. JRS allowed me to refurbish a gallery at the centre to display my work.

Now, things are better. We often spend time at the community centre and our children are so happy there, with friends from different countries. It is really a place for change. I came with empty hands and now I am equipped with skills that help me keep my family. For me, the centre is proof of the reality that people care for one another and that pain can be eased through accompaniment and service.



© At the community centre in Addis Ababa. (JRS International)



© Byumba camp, Rwanda. (JRS International)

They deserve our best

Tony Calleja SJ, Director, JRS Great Lakes

We must never forget that the life of refugees is really violent. All the same, faced with their suffering, we refuse to believe in irreversible misfortune. We want to respond to the strong hope that lies in the depth of the hearts of the refugees. In their millions, they teach us how to cope with daily adversity. And, inspired by our faith, we are prompted to reaffirm life with our actions, particularly when it is under threat.

Our point of departure remains the situation of the refugees, victims of so much violence. It is the precariousness and fragility of their plight that defines our mission. JRS accompanies refugees until they regain a life of greater humanity and dignity.

In a world that so easily rejects and would like to forget refugees altogether, we are committed to seeking, together with them, justice and the defence of their rights, to tackle the abuses they are subjected to, and the destruction of the very fabric of their lives. We firmly believe that one day they will be transformed into agents of reconciliation for their people. The refugees need people who are bearers of hope. They deserve our most dedicated efforts.

At a glance

	Burundi	DRC	Rwanda
Education	1,387	21,699	12,092
Emergency aid		82 (families)	
Food security	61,285		
Healthcare		76*	
Reintegration (ex-child soldiers)		87	
Shelter	600		
Support (vulnerable refugees)		2,386	526
Youth/culture		8,214	10,842

*Medical staff trained

In **Burundi**, supporting returnees in the east, JRS focused on: consolidating and expanding a system of durable food security; assistance for secondary school students; the construction of houses for vulnerable people.

In **DRC**, JRS closed projects and started others in 2009. In North Kivu, activities of education, reconstruction of schools, and support for vulnerable people were stepped up in Rutshuru and launched in Masisi, while projects in IDP camps around Goma ended when the camps closed in September. A teacher-training and reconstruction project in Kisangani was completed while a health project in Wanie Rukula was transferred to the diocese. In Uvira, the staff of a project for ex-child soldiers formed an association to take over as JRS withdrew.

In **Rwanda**, JRS continued to provide quality education and other services for Congolese refugees in Kiziba and Gihembe camps, a commitment enduring for several years.



© Kiziba camp, Rwanda. (JRS International)

DRC

A ray of hope?

Angélique Chayeka has dedicated her working life to education. Born in Rutshuru, she went to university in Kinshasa and thereafter worked in North Kivu. She shares her experience as Director of the JRS informal education project in the IDP camps in Goma:

Implemented in four camps, the project consisted of teaching a trade to young people aged between 12 and 18: hairdressing, dressmaking, repairing bicycles, baking and others. We offered four months of training, some work experience, and a kit to start up in the trade learnt. Some 1000 young people benefited.

By July, we had already heard that the camps were going to close. Thus it began: a slow exodus. Families whose children were benefiting from the project left them behind to continue their training. JRS had to raise awareness to prevent young people from being left alone in the camps, without anything to eat or anywhere to sleep. The mood changed a lot in that people's thoughts were clearly elsewhere; perhaps they nurtured a slim hope of starting a new life but at the same time they worried about the possibility of new conflict erupting.

The ultimatum for the closure of the camps was 15 September. My impression is that the move was not well managed; the roads were packed with people carrying their few belongings, going home on foot, a journey of days and days under the sun and rain. Since the authorities used the strategy of cutting back on rations, people had no choice but to leave. Each time less food was distributed and life became really tough. If one had to die, better to go back and die at home, was the feeling among many of those who were displaced. Working with JRS really helped me to understand their plight. I got to know families who had been constantly displaced since 1993. There was so much suffering and people were so tired – you could see some with lifeless expressions, like ghosts. Certainly the displaced people want stability after spending years in miserable conditions. Perhaps the closure of the camps and return home has given a ray of hope for a new beginning.



© Learning a trade in the IDP camps in Goma. (JRS International)

Rwanda

A long-standing presence

Forty-nine-year-old Gashema Ruviri from Masisi in DRC was displaced by ethnic conflict. He eventually left his country for neighbouring Rwanda to escape persecution by Hutu militias who had come the opposite way, from Rwanda to Kivu.

I left home on 10 April 1993 at 10am due to ethnic warfare between the Bahundes and Congolese of Rwandan origin. We were chased away after our homes were burned down, as the Bahundes pillaged our herds and other belongings. Many of us were killed. The situation was catastrophic.

The aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide led to the flight of Hutus from Rwanda to DRC. When they crossed the border, some started to wreak havoc in DRC too. So we escaped to Rwanda. I crossed the Congolese border in 1997 after hiding several times in border areas. We received a warm welcome from UNHCR and Rwanda, our host country, and were transferred to Mudende. Initially, we faced many challenges; life was difficult for us as new arrivals in a country not our own. UNHCR met our basic needs, giving us food and water that were always insufficient, considering the huge number of people to be helped.

After two months, we were threatened by the Interahamwe (Hutu) militia who massacred many people in Mudende. This prompted us to go further into Rwanda where we could feel safer. On 22 December 1997, I arrived here in Byumba, where I work as a teacher in the primary school of Gihembe camp.

JRS came to help us Congolese refugees in the two camps of Kiziba and Gihembe in 1996 and 1998 respectively, in pre-school, primary and secondary education. Their presence has brought great consolation into my life. Two of my five boys were awarded scholarships and I was helped to complete my secondary school studies and to get a certificate. In all its years of service in these camps, JRS has made a big effort to overcome the difficulties encountered and has contributed to many sectors: culture, sports, recreation, service for the vulnerable, youth centres, computer training. I hope JRS will keep on accompanying us until we return to our dear homeland.



© Kiziba camp, Rwanda, where JRS has been providing education and other services for several years. (JRS International)



📷 Seeking refuge in South Africa. (JRS International)

Helping refugees make their way

Joanne Whitaker RSM, Director, JRS Southern Africa

Peter, a carpenter, arrived on time. He came to the regional office in Johannesburg at my request to do repairs on furniture and to build some shelves. He got right down to work, measuring for the wood he would have to buy and checking the desks that needed repair. Then he left telling me that he would get three quotes for the needed materials. I told Peter that I was impressed by his professionalism. He responded proudly that he had taught carpentry in a vocational school in Zimbabwe for many years but could not continue because he was not paid and needed to support his family. I invited Peter to have something to eat and drink. While he ate, he read a book from our small library. When he rose to leave I told him to take the book. He replied, “No, thank you. It will be stolen where I live.” The life of urban refugees is precarious and Peter’s words illustrate this vulnerability.

The JRS urban refugee project in South Africa assists men and women like Peter to become self-reliant, find a decent place to live, and send their children to school. Livelihood programmes provide grants and loans to get a business started; assistance in getting qualifications evaluated so nurses and teachers can find a job; put people in touch with potential employers; and offer English lessons so that people can make their way in South Africa.

At a glance

	Angola	DRC	Malawi	South Africa	Zambia	Zimbabwe
Advocacy	7,868			14,789		15
Construction		3,880	270			
Cultural/social					4,500	50
Education		94	6,587	2,971		3,669
Emergency aid				3,130		1,535
Healthcare				1,719		23
Livelihoods				1,810		859
Pastoral					3,000	
Psychosocial support			651			
Unaccompanied minors				223		

JRS in [Angola](#) focused on five provinces, providing free legal advice and protection for refugees and asylum seekers as well as education of public officials. Particular attention was paid to raising awareness of sexual and gender-based violence and offering support to victims.

In September, JRS initiated a project of building and reconstructing schools in Moba, Katanga Province, [DRC](#). Moba has many displaced people as well as returnees from refugee camps in Zambia.

JRS [Malawi](#) continued to concentrate on education in Dzaleka camp; both the primary and secondary schools attained excellent examination results and adult language classes thrived. The psychosocial programme expanded with the intake of 20 trained volunteer community counsellors.

JRS [South Africa](#) operated in two provinces, offering a wide range of services to urban refugees in Gauteng Province and, in Limpopo Province, emergency assistance, information and advice to Zimbabweans entering South Africa.

Since many of the refugees in Mwange camp, [Zambia](#), returned to Congo, JRS concluded its services in Zambia at the end of July. The local diocese has assumed responsibility for the pastoral care of refugees remaining in the camp.

JRS [Zimbabwe](#) provided assistance to refugees at Tongogaro camp and Harare transit centre as well as food, seed and access to school to vulnerable children in the Checheche area and displaced persons in the Chishawasha area.

South Africa

JRS believed in me

Attaining self-sustainability, difficulty in accessing documentation and services, and constant harassment coming from xenophobia, make it far from easy for asylum seekers and refugees to make their way in South Africa. Celio, however, feels at home:

I have been living in South Africa since 2004. It is not my country of origin but is now a place I can call home because of the support of JRS. I arrived here after fleeing my country, DRC, in fear for my life.

My father used to work in the telecommunications department in the government of Kabila. When the government changed, most people lost their jobs, but a few, including my father, were reinstated by the new administration. A few months later, he was arrested because the new government believed he had failed to disclose information it wanted. I started to get visits from strangers who I think worked for the government. Since I was the eldest son, they thought I had information, but I had no knowledge of anything they wanted to know. After five long months, thankfully, my father was released and returned to us. But a short time later he was killed and his body found in a river. My family encouraged me to move to another village. Eventually, it became clear that I should leave the country altogether.

After many days in a truck, I arrived in Angola, where I stayed for some months before proceeding to Namibia and finally to South Africa. Imagine reaching a new country and not knowing anyone. A Good Samaritan directed me to Yeoville where I met fellow countrymen and at last felt at home. What made me remain hopeful was regularly attending church. It was through this that I learned about the work of JRS and, after my first meeting with a social worker, I received much needed assistance.

JRS helped me to see that I had the skills and abilities to improve my situation. I no longer lived for the moment but for something greater. Josephine, the self-reliance officer, told me: "Celio, with your talent in sewing, you are an asset. The only things you need are start-up capital and your motivation." In 2008, with the help of JRS, I managed to get a job as a designer. Even though the wages were low, I saved and saved to purchase a sewing machine. I was now a small business owner! JRS believed in me and this prompted me to think about further possibilities. Then all my belongings were taken during the xenophobia attacks that swept across South Africa in May 2008. Once again my life was miserable. I moved what I had left to the "safety city" created by the government. I wondered, now what? What can I do? Where can I go? How am I going to take care of myself? My first step was to return to JRS. Once again, I received support and now I have my own design shop. My hope is to employ and train other refugees.



© A Zimbabwean who recently entered South Africa sleeping rough in a park in Limpopo Province. (JRS International)

Malawi

A new perspective

Neema from Burundi lives in Dzaleka camp in Malawi. She joined the JRS psychosocial programme in 2008 and says her work is a source of pride and joy for her:

I'm happy. Before, I was always thinking about the past and worrying about the future. Now I'm busy, I'm working. I feel free. What is the reason? I am a community counsellor. I have a skill that helps people and I know that others in the camp respect me because I work for JRS. JRS means something to people here and that's important to me. It makes me feel good about what I do.

My desire to help others came from a previous experience I had while living in a refugee camp in Tanzania. I worked as a peer counsellor, helping women who had been through difficult experiences to talk about their problems. I felt I was making a difference, albeit small, in their lives. When I left Tanzania for Malawi, I didn't think I would have the chance to help again. Then in 2008, the opportunity to train as a community counsellor with JRS arose, and I jumped at it. I was so happy when I was selected for the 12-week training course. I learned many things and enjoyed working with the other volunteers. At the end, we were all welcomed to the JRS team as Dzaleka's first community counsellors. Being a community counsellor is more than just a job; it has given me a new perspective for my own life as well. As refugees, we all have problems, and it's easy to get angry about your life. But working with people, helping them to find solutions to their problems and to create their own goals, makes you feel compassion for others, even for yourself. I have a renewed sense of hope, of purpose and of peace because of my work with JRS. I look forward to keeping my enthusiasm alive with the ongoing training and monthly counsellors' meetings I attend in the camp.



© Angola: JRS offers free legal advice to refugees & asylum seekers. This man and other Congolese refugees in Melanje spent years without recognition of their status or assistance. Most now have refugee status and will hopefully become Angolan citizens. (JRS International)



© In class in Habile 1, a school in KouKou, eastern Chad, for IDPs. The teacher is Yasine Souleymane, who has undergone two years of training with JRS. (Don Doll SJ/JRS)

Going beyond the challenges

Kapitula Nzanu SJ, Director, JRS West Africa

In 2010, 17 African countries are set to mark 50 years of independence – a new stage in the history of the continent. Despite upheavals, trials, setbacks and steps backwards, we must persevere along the path beyond these challenges. With realism, freedom and solidarity as our starting points, we should be able to read the signs of hope and the demands inscribed in the heart of the history of our Africa. The testimonies of those we serve are a refrain evoking, invoking and inviting justice, peace and reconciliation. We want to accompany, serve and defend these aspirations, focusing on children's education, teacher-training and the rebuilding of infrastructures for the benefit of refugees, IDPs, victims of disaster and other vulnerable people.

Our trust is that the golden jubilee of 2010 will be a new point of departure in efforts towards the consolidation of a future of pride and dignity for Africa.

At a glance

	CAR	Chad	Ivory Coast
Child soldiers		230	
Education	18,970	54,000	1,990
Emergency aid	40,643*		
Pastoral, Social services	56,279**		

* Much of this aid consists of food distribution.

** This figure takes into account thousands reached in liturgical and inter-religious activities.

In September, floods in Ouagadougou, [Burkina Faso](#), left more than 30,000 families homeless. JRS came to the aid of families in two neighbourhoods, giving children school kits and subsidising school fees.

Eastern [Chad](#) was characterised by internal conflict, tensions with Sudan, inter-ethnic violence and increased crime. As of September, 168,000 Chadians were internally displaced in the region, which is also home to 12 camps for some 250,000 Sudanese refugees. JRS continued to provide extensive education services for IDPs and refugees and supported the reintegration of ex-child soldiers.

In [Côte d'Ivoire](#), two new initiatives were taken in 2009 in the project to improve local primary schools in rural areas in the north. One focused on healthcare: schoolchildren and teachers were vaccinated against endemic diseases after an outbreak of yellow fever. The other initiative made parents aware of the importance of having their children officially registered.

JRS swiftly expanded services across [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), where it set up in late 2008. Education, social services, pastoral activities and peace education were provided in two provinces, Ouham and Haute Kotto, where thousands have been displaced by internal conflict. In November, JRS started to support education and distribute emergency relief in a camp for Congolese refugees in Zemio and, at the end of the year, to reach out to new arrivals from DRC in Mongoumba.



© Guéréda, Chad, where JRS runs a project for the reintegration of former child soldiers. (JRS International)

Central African Republic

Things have changed

In Markounda, Ouham Province, JRS adopts a community-based approach, strengthening local institutions to care for people who are especially vulnerable, like 12-year-old Deram Tatiana:

I was born in Bele, a village 30km from Markounda. The Presidential Guard burned down our village.* My mother was left homeless and died a few months later. I am told that my father joined the insurgency and died in the bush. I ran away from Bele to Markounda with three other children who had lost their parents too. In Markounda, we joined some children who lived in the streets and built a small grass house. When it rained, we got wet. When we fell ill, we had no treatment. Sometimes we spent days and days without food. It was very difficult to get soap and clothes. I didn't have shoes.

One day we decided to visit the Catholic sisters (of St Joseph of Turin) so that we could go to their school. When they asked us to pay school fees, I told them I am an orphan. We agreed that I would help with small jobs in the parish to cover my fees and I started going to school in 2007. In January 2009, the head teacher told me I didn't need to work in the parish anymore. It was a sad day because I thought I was going to be out of school. Then I learned that JRS was going to take care of me and my friends, to pay our school fees and healthcare.

The sister told me JRS would also help to build a house for us but first they had to try to trace any relatives willing to take care of us. The relatives of four children were found and they returned to their families; two other girls and I remained as we had no one. JRS brought construction materials and the sisters provided the bricks for the house we now live in. JRS gave the sisters money to buy us kitchen utensils, clothes, shoes, blankets, school uniforms and stationery. And food: we eat every day now. Life has changed a lot. JRS and the sisters visit and pray with us. Since I stopped working for my school fees, I have improved in my studies and am coming near the top of the class. I want to be a nurse when I grow up.

* The Presidential Guard displaced thousands of people in northern CAR in a ruthless scorched-earth policy to smoke out the rebels.



© A village in Markounda, where homes were destroyed by the Presidential Guard. (JRS International)

Côte d'Ivoire

The work of God

Recent war, fragile peace and poor governance have severely affected the educational system of Côte d'Ivoire, especially in the north. JRS runs two projects in the northern commune of Madinani, enabling local schools to welcome returnees. Ten schools have been rebuilt and teachers trained. The speech delivered by a retired local leader, when JRS International Director Peter Balleis SJ was present, reveals why this support means so much:

We can't find the words to express our joy and gratitude for what JRS has done. The school in Kokoun is about 50 years old and had never been refurbished. It was in such an advanced state of dilapidation that we leaders used to feel terrible seeing it like this every time we came to the village. The war made things worse. A number of children had to leave the village to find safety. We encountered enormous difficulties when we tried to do something so that the school would not close forever. Unfortunately we didn't manage to find the means to renovate it. Today, we say that it is God, in his mercy, who led JRS to our village in an area forgotten by the state and where NGOs dare not venture. We are very proud to see such a nice school building now.

We are mostly Muslims but we are convinced that the work you are doing is the work of God. Your actions have encouraged a rapprochement between Kokoun and Mahandiana-Koura; these two villages have buried their differences because they have been transformed by a shared interest: the physical and operational restoration of their primary schools by JRS.



© At the ceremony, as a sign of gratitude, the JRS International Director, Peter Balleis SJ, was given one sheep, four chickens, and plenty of yam roots. (JRS International)



© Two local leaders sit at a school bench presented by JRS to symbolise the benches of a new school for the village of Kokoun. The one on the left gave the thanksgiving speech. (JRS International)



📷 A boatload of undocumented migrants lands in Malta. (Times of Malta)

Bridging human experience and policy-making

Michael Schöpf SJ, Director, JRS Europe

Human experience and policy-making have drifted further apart. The European Union (EU) border agency presented a strategic plan that proposes a 78% budget increase for 2010, over 2009, for return operations and “pre-return assistance”. Countries lacking protection of fundamental rights, like Libya, are included in these considerations. And Italian political leaders congratulated themselves for returning hundreds of people to Libya, without examining their protection claims, after finding them stranded off Italian shores. In 1980, the year JRS was founded, the fate of the Vietnamese boat people struck a chord with policy-makers and resulted in their resettlement in many European countries among others. Today we are much better informed about the suffering of people at our borders and yet it has become largely impossible to connect to the human experience of those who are forced to migrate. JRS Europe is present in places of suffering in several countries and tries to relate this experience to services and policies that immediately affect the forcibly displaced. We understand this work as a small step towards closing the gap between the proclamation and simultaneous violation of the basic rights of those who are in need of protection.

At a glance

In 2009, JRS had 14 national offices across Europe and active contact persons in another seven countries.

In [Belgium](#), [Germany](#), [Ireland](#), [Malta](#), [Portugal](#), [Slovenia](#), [Sweden](#), [Romania](#), [the United Kingdom](#) and the [western Balkans](#), JRS teams visited detention centres to offer psychosocial and pastoral support, legal aid and other services to asylum seekers and irregular migrants. In most of these places, and in [France](#) and [Italy](#), support was also provided to forcibly displaced people in the community, including food, lodging, social services, healthcare, legal aid, language and computer courses and help to find work.

In 2009, JRS strengthened its capacity to accompany those who can no longer reach Europe. Projects in [Morocco](#) and [Ukraine](#) were fully operational, with a kindergarten and safe place for women in Casablanca and safe accommodation and legal counselling in Lviv, western Ukraine.

Services and advocacy reflected the main concerns of JRS Europe: destitution, detention and externalisation. The regional office coordinated two projects, the Detention of Vulnerable Asylum Seekers (DEVAS) and the Advocacy Network for Destitute Forced Migrants (ANDES), and analysed emerging EU laws on asylum to lobby for just policies.



© The Jesuit Superior General, Adolfo Nicolás SJ, marking the launch of the JRS Ireland 2008 report in Limerick. He is pictured here being presented with a Barcelona soccer shirt by Zaccheaus McBonnie Marumo and Bhezuzulu Khumalo. Fr Nicolás praised the JRS staff for their continuing dedication to accompanying and serving those who seek refuge in Ireland. He also voiced his concern at the growing trend in many European countries to close off their borders and lock their doors to people seeking help. "There are no such things as migrants or refugees, only people," he said. "And the lines and borders on maps are only lines, not reality." (Press 22)

Italy

A painful past

JRS Italy has an extensive network of services for asylum seekers and refugees in the community. In 2009, more than 15,000 approached Centro Astalli in Rome to ask for social or legal assistance. A soup kitchen served some 400 people daily. JRS runs seven accommodation centres in Italy, including two opened in 2009 for destitute single mothers and for unaccompanied minors. Many of those supported have been severely traumatised, like Ali:

Ali comes from Jaghouri, central Afghanistan. He lived with his parents and three brothers, one of them his identical twin. When he was 13, his parents were killed. At the time, Ali didn't know why. It was only later that he understood it was for political reasons. Ali and his brothers were taken in by a neighbouring family. They went to Pakistan and then to Iran. In Iran they were always afraid of being deported so Ali headed for Europe and his twin returned to Afghanistan.

On 6 January 2009, 18-year-old Ali arrived in Italy, where he was placed in the San Saba shelter of JRS in Rome. Months later, Ali learned that his twin brother had been killed, another severe shock on top of the traumas he had already experienced. He didn't give away much during counselling – he was plagued by bouts of memory loss – but medical reports revealed that Ali had been tortured.

JRS Centro Astalli helped Ali from the start of his stay in Italy. Our legal team helped him to file his asylum claim, accompanied him to the police, and referred him to social services. When it became clear that Ali needed psychological and medical help, our staff gave him the care he needed. Reports, describing the physical and mental torture he had undergone, were presented to UNHCR and to the Territorial Commission. Ali was recognised as a refugee on 1 August and is now beginning his path towards integration.



© The Casa di Giorgia accommodation centre for women, asylum seekers and refugees, run by JRS in Rome. (Marcello Ruso)

Belgium

I could tell my story

In Belgium, JRS visits five detention centres weekly. More than 500 people were accompanied throughout 2009. Theo was one of them:

“You have to go back to your country,” the social worker told me when I arrived in the detention centre. After having applied for asylum and living in Belgium for three years, this sentence turned me crazy with fear. I spent three months and two weeks in the detention centre. It was a very difficult time for me, especially due to the strict schedule to which I was submitted. It gave me a prison-like feeling. I could not choose what time to eat, to wake up, to go for a walk, to sleep. Everything was decided for me. The most painful experience was when they brought me to Court in handcuffs. Why? I hadn’t stolen anything!

Really, this will distress me for the rest of my life. I remember the night before I was to be taken to my embassy in order to obtain a travel document. I wanted to commit suicide. In the end it was my faith in God that rescued me. It was absurd to bring me to the authorities of the country I had fled.

Fortunately, some people supported me. The chaplain always gave me hope and JRS too. When I met Nathalie, the JRS visitor, I could tell her my story. She listened to me. This gave me the feeling that it was still possible to communicate with someone normally. This was a great relief because, you know, everyone has problems in the centre. People are stressed and anxious, focused only on one thing: how to regain their freedom.

Once I had spoken to Nathalie, she went through my documents and explained what was written. She gave me information about the procedures. I understood that I had to be patient and calm down. When she left the centre, she got in touch with my lawyer, and some friends of mine, to inform them. Then she came back the next week and the one after, always on Wednesday. I started to look forward to those Wednesdays. It filled me with joy to realize that someone had made the effort to come all the way to meet me. My mother used to say: “When a friend comes to visit you, know that he loved you already before he knocked on your door.”

The day I was released, I had no place to stay. I had lost many things. Now I have to rebuild my life. I am still anxious when I see the police, but I try not to think too much about what happened, because I need to continue my life. My thoughts go out to all those who are still detained, I want to encourage them, as well as JRS.



© Theo (right) and Nathalie.



© An Iraqi family struggling to get by in Damascus. The younger son cannot walk, the older one does not speak. The father was kidnapped for seven months in Iraq. (JRS International)

Waiting and hoping

As Iraq remained unstable in 2009 (Iraqis continued to seek asylum abroad throughout the year), return home was not an option for most of the Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan, who faced an increasingly desperate situation as they struggled to survive in urban areas. Although respected in both countries, the refugees had no clear legal status and could not work legally. Their savings depleted, they were hard pressed to pay rising prices of rent, food and other basics. Many lived in isolation, waiting and hoping for resettlement, and worrying endlessly about their children, often deprived of quality education and forced by poverty to work.

At a glance

	Jordan	Syria
Emergency aid	120 (families)	367
Family visits	380	43
Informal education	260	485
Legal aid		13
Livelihoods		35
Recreational, psychosocial activities	139	219

In [Syria](#) and [Jordan](#), 2009 marked the first full year of operation of JRS programmes for Iraqi refugees. In [Syria](#), informal education and psychosocial activities flourished at St Vartan community centre in Aleppo – home to 26,000 refugees. In Damascus, JRS cooperated with other faith-based aid projects to visit and support vulnerable people at home, in shelters and in prison. In Amman in [Jordan](#), JRS carried out home visits and educational, recreational and kindergarten programmes in school premises in Ashrafieh.



Everyone is welcome to the JRS classes at the St Vartan centre in Aleppo, Syria. (JRS International)

Jordan

A sense of community

In Amman, JRS offers English, French and computer courses, art, music, drama, sports and other activities. The aim of bringing refugees together is to provide sorely needed opportunities for interaction as much as for learning. We meet members of the JRS team, composed mostly of Iraqi refugees as well as local and international staff:



JRS has allowed me to have a positive impact by working directly with the people who most need help. I quickly developed great respect for the organisation and its work with refugees, not least because it lacks the bureaucracy that so often prevents people from getting the support they need. Iraqis in Jordan can find a home in JRS, a sense of community and the opportunity to learn skills not easily found elsewhere. There is a semblance of normal life, which many refugees have not known for a number of years, and which is crucial for their psychological wellbeing.

An English teacher with JRS, Christopher Michael came to Jordan on a Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholarship from San Diego.



I left Baghdad in 2008 because the security situation was so bad. My brother was kidnapped in 2006 and we know nothing about his whereabouts. Then all the staff members of the company where I worked were threatened with kidnapping so it closed down. Here in Amman, I heard about JRS from a childhood friend. He said his wife had applied to work here and would I like to try? I said yes because I had no job. It is the first time that I work for a non-governmental organisation and it is a pleasure to do so – really we work as a team. I started to teach computers. The difficulty in the classes was that I had to balance between all levels of knowledge, going up and down. We had students who didn't even know what a mouse was! I didn't like to hurry on without each one learning everything. Despite the difficulties, I was very happy to teach the classes because I could see the students wanted to learn; they were really eager, always thanking and blessing me.

Kais joined JRS in February 2009 and in September was promoted to head of administration, finance and logistics.

© Attending JRS activities in Amman. (JRS International)



Syria

Creating moments of joy

Languages and computer, tuition for secondary school exams... the courses offered by JRS at St Vartan in Aleppo have become increasingly popular. But people come for more. "The JRS centre has become a meeting place, a place where people can overcome their worries and anguish," says Sr Hala Daoud. This is partly due to the psychosocial programme she runs. At St Vartan, recreational activities such as cookery, embroidery, drawing, puppetry and sports, become therapeutic means to help the refugees face their past, make the most of their present and prepare for their future.



© Julei and Naheda.

"We never forget the essential aim, which is to listen, to share with the refugees the consequences of the war," says Paul Diab SJ, Director of JRS Syria. Iraqi sisters Julei and Naheda used to organise psychosocial activities with Sr Hala before being resettled in Canada in September 2009. "In Baghdad, we were involved in youth education in the neighbourhood church and we were happy to be able to do this work in Aleppo, where Iraqis need so much support," says Julei. "We tackled sensitive subjects, in groups and individually, as we helped others to come to terms with the war, with evil, to overcome hatred and to face their problems. Sr Hala always used to tell us: *you must look for those who need one-to-one attention.*"

Equally essential to the healing process are times of celebration. "We take advantage of feasts to create moments of joy," says Sr Hala. "We take time to say goodbye too as people leave for resettlement. They had no choice but to leave Iraq, torn away from their land. This time, they are not torn away but leaving with what they have lived at the centre. They experience beautiful friendships and this is why we celebrate their departure together. They do not leave alone; we remain linked together." Fr Paul agrees: "The positive atmosphere at St Vartan has created warm relationships between the JRS team and the families, who share their lives with us and never miss the opportunity to say thank you."



© Sr Hala sharing a joke with children at St Vartan. (JRS International)

© At St Vartan, children articulate their hopes and fears through drawing:

(top) I'm happy because I have the visa to leave.

(right) I am afraid of death.

(far right) The bridge helps us to love one another.





© Dili, Timor-Leste. (Don Doll SJ/JRS)

Failing to offer protection

Bernard Hyacinth Arputhasamy SJ, Director, JRS Asia Pacific

An old Malay proverb says: “Two elephants fight each other; a mouse-deer dies in the middle.” The contrast – elephant (big) and mouse-deer (small) – is deliberate, depicting the powerlessness of people who are forced to escape, to seek refuge, as ‘big’ nation-states forge or forgo alliances based on geo-political-economic interests or take decisions informed by ethno-centric prejudices. National citizenship laws strip some of their identity and dignity: this is the plight of the Rohingya minority of Burma, rendered stateless by a 1982 law. The ‘small’ people turn their eyes in hope to international protection regimes but sophisticated definitions, drawn up in the comfort of conference rooms, have demonstrably failed to protect them. *You have power, I don’t. You can choose to protect me or you can choose for me to die*, said an asylum seeker who was eventually deported by force. Asylum seekers leave from Burma, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, China and countless other countries. They brave perilous journeys, victimised further by traffickers and smugglers, to attain what every person desires: food, shelter, education, health, cultural-religious freedom. They want to dream about the future of their children, to live and die with dignity. But our civilization has advanced laws to keep them out or to put them away in prison-like conditions. They remain the ‘mouse-deer’, powerless, not knowing why they must be victims.

At a glance

	Australia	Cambodia	Indonesia	Timor-Leste	Thailand
Advocacy	400	133	111	58 (families)	3,419
Education			807		11,751
Emergency aid	70			35	170,706**
Healthcare					15,884
Livelihoods					68
Pastoral					8,152
Peace-building; disaster risk reduction			1,292	598	
Psychosocial support	1,830				1,779
Research	113,000*				
Shelter	30			90	
Voluntary repatriation assistance					298

* The residents of islands that are the subject of JRS research into Pacific displacement, they are people of concern rather than actually benefiting from JRS services.

** This includes nearly 169,000 people who passed through the detention centre of Mae Sot. JRS provides supplies to the centre as a whole, for example, mats, blankets, basic medicines, ceiling fans.

JRS in [Australia](#) accompanied and provided emergency assistance for immigration detainees in Sydney and on Christmas Island and asylum seekers and refugees in the community. Broadening its reach, JRS trained personnel of the Diocese of Daru Kiunga in Papua New Guinea, who are working with refugees, and researched root causes of displacement in the Pacific region.

In [Cambodia](#), JRS persevered with the promotion of refugee rights, taking a critical stance towards the government after 20 Uighurs were forcibly repatriated to China. JRS had worked closely with the Uighur asylum seekers, providing accommodation and other support and advising them on their case.

In [Indonesia](#), JRS responded to a surge of asylum seekers from Asia and the Middle East by assisting those in detention in Medan, North Sumatra, and Cisarua, West Java. In Aceh, JRS engaged communities in capacity-building, to develop a more just and peaceful society, and in disaster risk management.

In [Singapore](#), the focus of JRS awareness-raising in 2009 was the plight of landmine survivors. JRS in Singapore supports the other regional projects.

In [Thailand](#), JRS continued to meet the education needs of refugees and migrant workers from Burma: of the Karenni in border camps in Mae Hong Son; of the Mon in Ranong; of the Shan and other minorities on the northern border. Urban and detention programmes offered assistance in Mae Sot and Bangkok.

In [Timor-Leste](#), JRS accompanied returning IDPs to their communities, offering mediation to settle land disputes and other conflicts, shelter and emergency assistance to the most vulnerable. Peace-building gained priority in 2009, involving young people through music and sports.

Cambodia

A listening ear

JRS Cambodia provides legal representation and social services to asylum seekers and refugees from Iran, China, Burma, Sudan, Somalia, Vietnam and elsewhere. One shares his story:

I am very afraid. In December 2009, Cambodia deported 20 Uighurs on a VIP jet to China, after taking them from a safe UNHCR/Government House at gunpoint. They were asylum seekers just like me. What will happen to me? I constantly ask JRS this question and, like me, they do not know the answer. I am at the mercy of UNHCR and the Cambodian government.

I ended up in Cambodia in January 2009, having fled my country where members of my family – we belong to an ethnic minority – had been imprisoned and executed. Soon after my arrival in Phnom Penh, a casual acquaintance suggested I ask JRS for help. So far I had relied on myself but I was getting increasingly worried that I might run out of time and money. JRS helped me make a statement to Cambodia's UNHCR representatives in order to gain refugee status. The usual interview that followed this statement led to the rejection of my case a month later. Despite the violent measures taken by my country's authorities against some of my brothers, UNHCR told me that they did not expect further problems for me or my family.

I was in shock. An appeal had to be written within a month and proof found of my still life-threatening situation back home. With the help of the JRS lawyers I managed to submit the necessary documents after UNHCR granted me some extra time. Almost one year after filing the appeal, I am still waiting for an answer. Will I finally be recognized as a refugee or not? When will I know? And what will happen then? All these months of waiting and uncertainty have created ever more fear and desperation in me.

Without JRS I would probably not be alive anymore. I am more than grateful for all the help that I, a Muslim, have received from my Catholic friends: legal assistance, financial aid enabling me to rent a small room and buy food, medical help, computer lessons and, last but not least, always an unbiased open ear to listen to my worries.

In early 2010, the writer was recognised as a refugee.



© Thai-Burma border: JRS supports education in camps for Karenni refugees in Mae Hong Son. (Don Doll SJ/JRS)

Australia

Becoming part of a community

JRS runs a shelter project for asylum seekers and refugees living in Sydney. Accommodation sourced includes houses for as many as 10 people, flats, boarding houses and emergency shelter in backpacker hostels. Gideon T., from Cameroon, explains how he found not only lodging but also friendship at Blaiket House, a JRS accommodation site:

I arrived in Australia on 3 March 2009. At first, I stayed with someone I met through some contacts for three months. This was the agreement we made but then I had to move out. Luckily, someone gave me the address and phone number of the Jesuit Refugee Service. I called JRS and was relieved to be given an appointment to go to visit their office. My coming to JRS was a stroke of good luck because I was about to be homeless and I was becoming desperate. JRS provided me with a place instantly and I felt I was home again. Life became interesting and worth living because of the assistance I was given: accommodation, food, clothing and money for transport to keep my appointments for my protection visa. I was happy throughout my stay in Blaiket House, not least because I had the chance to learn about other peoples and cultures, from fellow lodgers coming from Sri Lanka, North Korea, Ghana, Turkey and India.

I was granted permanent protection about three months ago. So my time to move on has now come. It is a bit scary and stressful to know that I will be 'on my own', but not really alone, because three of us from Blaiket House will share a place. What's more, I know that I can always come back to JRS to see my friends here. I would like to end by thanking JRS for giving me a chance to be part of their community and to the Australian government for my new home.



© Gideon (left), with a friend from the shelter project, Francis.



© Indonesia: A JRS project in Aceh engages different sectors of the community in disaster risk reduction (DRR). In this area prone to environmental disaster, the aim is to understand, predict and better meet the risks. The team has devised countless creative ways of making DRR relevant in each of the three areas of focus: schools, youth and the community at large. (Don Doll SJ/JRS)



© IDPs in northern Sri Lanka. (JRS International)

Ensuring human dignity

Prakash Louis SJ, Director, JRS South Asia

In South Asia, conflict and crises have become endemic, due in no small part to ethnic, economic, political and religious differences. Uprooted from their homes by insecurity and injustice, people become refugees, internally displaced, returnees, detainees, stateless... and are subjected to immense hardship and misery. For many years, JRS South Asia has been responding to their needs through committed, credible and considerable service in Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka, Nepal and, more recently, Afghanistan. The response varies – formal and informal education, vocational training, income-generation, self-help groups, advocacy – but the underlying aim is the same, going beyond meeting basic needs to ensuring the human dignity of each and every person served, especially those who are somehow vulnerable. It is not JRS that is the focal point but the people who are searching for their future, dignity and rights, and for durable solutions. They teach JRS to be flexible, creative and concrete in its responses.

At a glance

	Afghanistan	India	Nepal	Sri Lanka
Education	155	15,718	38,150	33,564
Emergency aid		716 & 190 families		38,000 & 5,041 families
Healthcare	400			
Home visits		4,461 (families)		
Livelihoods	71			2,387
Psychosocial support		360 (families)		
Social, community development		18,351		1,395
Support (vulnerable refugees)		163		
Youth centres			13,387	

In [Afghanistan](#), JRS supported families living in Sohadat, a returnee township on the outskirts of the city of Herat. A primary school was inaugurated on 1 April.

In eastern [Nepal](#), JRS continued an education programme for the Bhutanese refugees. Nearly 25,600 refugees resettled in third countries between October 2007 and December 2009.

In 2009, [Sri Lanka](#)'s war ended after more than 30 years with an army victory. Some 280,000 Tamils who fled the war zone were confined to 'welfare centres' – overcrowded detention camps. Under international pressure, the government started to release them in large numbers in October. JRS worked in the war-torn north and east: education and emergency aid were provided in the welfare centres and, as the people started to return to their often destroyed places of origin, JRS accompanied them. Programmes continued for people long displaced, with a focus on education and community development.

Education and community development programmes were maintained in the southern Indian state of [Tamil Nadu](#), home to 73,000 Sri Lankan refugees. JRS has centres in nearly all 110 refugee camps.



© A special needs class in Sanischare camp, eastern Nepal, where JRS and Caritas provide education for Bhutanese refugees. (Sara Pettinella/JRS)

Sri Lanka

I know who holds the future

One of those accompanied by JRS in the war zones of Sri Lanka is 22-year-old Aravinth. His family bears the scars of ethnic violence and the war that pitted the army against the now defunct Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Although Aravinth has moved on, his past haunts him.

I am at university and determined to study well. Yet sometimes a deep sense of insecurity pervades my being. My grandfather used to tell us how he lost everything during the 1958 anti-Tamil riots by Sinhalese thugs in the south. My father suffered the same fate when he went to the south to run a shop. In “black July” 1983, Tamils were targeted in widespread rioting. Sinhalese friends saved my father but he returned home empty handed.

We were happy although we grew up in the midst of the war. My father had a small shop and did farming. There was no electricity in the Vanni (the northern region that was the stronghold of the LTTE) so we studied with the light of hurricane lamps. Many a time we sat for exams amid aerial bombardments, rushing to the bunkers and returning to continue our exams once the bombing was over. In 1998, we had to take refuge in a distant village. We lost the youngest in the family to a snake bite because of the economic embargo imposed on the Vanni and the consequent shortage of medicines. This was the first time I encountered people from JRS. They consoled me and helped me to cope with the tragedy. Aware of the conditions of my family in displacement, they enrolled me as a scholarship student for secondary school.

In 2002, there was a ceasefire and we returned home. But war resumed and, in 2007, my younger brother was forcibly recruited by the LTTE. In early 2009, we were forced out of our village again as the army advanced – the darkest days of our lives. When we escaped from the battle zone we ended up in a ‘welfare centre’. Imprisonment, hunger, inadequate hygiene, constant interrogations, became our lot. The presence of paramilitary groups and Intelligence personnel threatened us; abductions and ‘disappearances’ sent shivers of panic among us.

Eventually I was released so I could continue my studies. If I am at university today, I owe much to JRS, which continues to support me. Still I am filled with pain for my brother who was recruited. We don’t know where he is although we have searched everywhere for him. What does the future hold? I don’t know but I know who holds the future. That’s my faith.



© One of the 'welfare centres' set up in north-east Sri Lanka to house Tamils displaced in the last round of the war in the Vanni. (JRS International)

Afghanistan

Life is good now

Visiting returnees in Sohadat township, near the city of Herat, JRS discovered many skilled in one trade or other. A project was launched to encourage livelihood activities, offering support from buying goats to setting up a beauty parlour. The small business of Ghulam Raboni received a welcome boost but this is not the only reason why he is happy JRS came to Sohadat:

We are a family of six. During the war between the Russians and the Mujahideen, we fled to Iran. Life was not that pleasant in exile and I always wanted to return to my motherland, which I did after the fall of the Taliban regime. However, when I went to my ancestral village, I realized that whatever land we had had was no longer suitable for cultivation because the war had destroyed it.

I decided to rent a room in the city of Herat where I could get some work on daily wages. After months of struggling, I set up my own business. With my savings, I bought a second-hand Zaranj [three-wheeler], and started to sell cooking gas. Then tragedy struck. I went to deliver gas on the city outskirts. In spite of the warning signs about landmines, I ventured into a field. I remember a loud explosion, moments of excruciating pain, and darkness. I had lost my right leg. I was desolate; I didn't want to be a burden. But my family and friends kept encouraging me. After a month in hospital, I returned home to a surprise: my friends had some modifications done to my Zaranj so I could drive it again. It took me some time to get used to the changes, but I managed, and this gave me the courage to resume my small business.

I got a small plot of land and a house in Sohadat and starting driving to Herat to stock up on gas. But I had only three cylinders, which were insufficient to cater for the growing population in the township. JRS helped me to buy a few more, which helped meet demand and reduced my trips to the city. The contribution of JRS to the township has been considerable: electricity, education, healthcare. At first, we had nothing. Now, thanks to a few NGOs, we have all we need. The school run by JRS gives our children the best education possible in the circumstances. And the clinic is a boon for us; we don't need to go far away for medicines and to pay expensive fees. Life in the township is good now.



© Ghulam Raboni at work



© Colombia: An interview with the Administrator of the board of *Acción Comunal* of El Diamante, Barrancabermeja. (Sergi Cámara/JRS)

The reason for our existence

Alfredo Infante SJ, Director, JRS Latin America

The humanitarian crises in Haiti and Colombia have a big impact on the region. The Haitian crisis is caused by injustice, structural poverty, and ecological disasters. In Colombia, there is a protracted, fratricidal armed conflict, rooted in injustice and in the interests of big corporations and mafias that are pursuing resources and land. Millions of people have been displaced by this conflict. I share the heartbreaking story of one of them, a woman who managed to reach the safety of a neighbouring country after being internally displaced several times. In Colombia, wherever she sought refuge, she lost someone she loved, including her son and her husband. Her family is a victim of all the warring parties: her husband was killed by the paramilitary, in complicity with the public authorities, and her son by the guerrillas. For her, armed groups are all the same: they steal peace, kill and strip people of all they have, without respect for life. But the injustice has not diminished her desire for life. She draws strength from within to continue living, to fight for her dignity in exile. As JRS accompanies this woman, she shows us and teaches us the truth of our mission; not just her, but many others like her, on the borders of Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela. They are the reason for our existence. Amid these two humanitarian crises, full of human faces and the cries of the excluded, we want to be a sign that another world is possible.

At a glance

	Colombia	Ecuador	Panama	Venezuela
Community development	106	391		679
Education	679	128	10	216
Emergency aid	2,797		179	465
Pastoral	457		48	
Peace-building	134	358	233	70
Social services*	3,485	3,104	135	1,963

* For this region, the social services category includes legal aid and income-generating activities.

In **Colombia**, JRS persevered in its mission to build a society based on respect for life with dignity for all. In three places deeply affected by the violence – Soacha, Magdalena Medio and Valle del Cauca – JRS offered psychosocial accompaniment, training in human rights and community-building programmes. There was a special focus on children and adolescents.

In 2009, **Ecuador** started to realise its first national refugee policy, launched in 2008, through the *Registro ampliado* for Colombian refugees. The aim of this mechanism is to register and respond to asylum claims on the same day. JRS participated in this process implemented in five border areas. JRS also accompanied some 46 local migration and refugee organisations, promoting dialogue between them and identifying ways of raising awareness.

In **Haiti** and the **Dominican Republic**, a bi-national project entitled *Solidaridad Fronteriza* (Border Solidarity) promoted the rights of Haitian migrants and refugees, as it has done for years. There are between 500,000 to 800,000 Haitians in the Dominican Republic. JRS services included: legal counselling; capacity-building of local refugee and/or migrant organisations; advocacy and cultural exchanges.

In **Panama**, JRS continued to develop projects of accompaniment and advocacy in Panama City and in Jaque and Puerto Piña, on the border, for Afro-Colombian and indigenous Colombian refugees.

Political tensions between the governments of Colombia and **Venezuela** led to heightened violence in border areas and tighter restrictions on the movement of refugees during 2009. Present in the Venezuelan states of Apure and Táchira, JRS accompanied more than 80 communities in border areas, supporting asylum seekers through the refugee status determination procedure and promoting their local integration.

Venezuela

Rebuilding from the ashes

JRS Venezuela has developed a host of programmes for refugee women. We share the story of María, who both facilitates and participates in JRS capacity-building workshops:

María was born in Colombia some 45 years ago. Her skin is browned by the sun and marked by suffering. A teacher, she was forced to flee her land in search of peace, in the hope of rebuilding her dreams. “I had to leave my village, there was violence from all sides,” she says. “I lost my husband in that violence, without even knowing why, without any explanation, just a word of apology: ‘it was a mistake,’ the paramilitaries said, ‘it wasn’t him we were looking for.’ Then the calvary started.” As she recalls events she would like to forget, María’s eyes fill with tears. “I tried to rebuild my life from the ashes. It’s like when you throw a glass. It smashes into little pieces and you have to fix it. Yes, you can manage to do it, but it’s a long process.”

Afraid that her children would be recruited as combatants in the war, María sent them to Venezuela and later followed them. But her family did not get the best of welcomes. The military forced her son to return to Colombia, despite his asylum claim, because he didn’t have documents. He was killed there. “The army killed him. I say kill because he is considered to be a *falso positivo*.* The most terrible thing is that this happened because he didn’t have a document.” Four months after her son was killed, María got to know that her brother had been murdered by guerrillas because he refused to collaborate with them.

María is an example of what thousands of people experience in Colombia but, more important, she is an example of strength, courage and the will to live. After the interview, she dries her tears and says: “I go now. My women are waiting for me – she refers to participants of a crafts workshop she is facilitating – Life must continue.”

* Here, *falso positivo* describes the practice by some members of the army in Colombia of executing civilians and then making it appear as if the victims were guerrillas legitimately killed in combat.



© Colombia: Civilians bear the brunt of the civil war. This family found refuge in Soacha, near Bogotá, after being displaced from Amazonas Department in southern Colombia. (Minerva Vitti/JRS)

Colombia

We want to change our reality

The founder of JRS, Pedro Arrupe SJ, wanted Jesuits to accompany those most in need, to go to places where people live in very tough situations. One such place is Soacha, a municipality on the outskirts of Bogotá that is home to thousands of IDPs. People are also displaced *from* Soacha because of threats, forced recruitment and killings by armed actors, legal and illegal, who create an atmosphere of militarisation. JRS has worked with Soacha Diocese since 2001 to restore the rights of the people, especially those who are vulnerable. Our work is inspired by the reality they experience.

One project develops activities geared towards self-reliance among a group of young people, giving them the chance to express and make known their skills in break-dance, singing, graffiti art and other forms of artistic expression. Apart from increasing their autonomy, the aim is to contribute to building a life of dignity for all. Urged to reflect on the dynamics and problems of their community, the young people receive training in human rights and lifeskills to enable them to make a difference.

The views voiced by the young people reveal the problems they face and their determination to overcome them:

The community thinks we are weeds because we are already damaged, because our past was bad, perhaps.

Facing them, we see ourselves as a bit vulnerable because, in one way or another, the community wants to destroy us.

But we also have projects and the desire to live.

We live apart from the bad things that other young people do in our area. We are not hooligans; we are jugglers, graffiti artists, we break-dance, sing rap. There are people who accuse us of stealing, killing and living a bad life. But this is a lie! We are artists! And we want to change our reality!

Many young people have been threatened, or have had to leave, just because they wanted to express themselves; others chose to hide, they felt afraid and stopped doing the things they liked, the projects they wanted to develop. So what we try to do is to change the situation, to express what we feel through art. We don't want more fighting between gangs, what we want is competition between singers, dancers and graffiti artists.



© Break-dance in Soacha. (Sergi Cámara/JRS)



© Ken Gavin SJ (right) greets young men as they queue up outside the Aid Centre for Deported Migrants (CAMDEP) in Nogales, Sonora, just across the border from the USA. (JRS International)

They are not alone

Kenneth Gavin SJ, Director, JRS USA

Every person has the right to worship in his or her own faith. Access to pastoral care is essential for hundreds of thousands of migrants detained annually by the federal government in prisons throughout the United States. Six years ago we successfully advocated for chaplaincy programmes in detention centres, guaranteeing detainees the opportunity to express their faith as they confront the life-changing prospect of being deported, separated from their families and, in many cases, returned to a country they barely know. In 2009, our chaplaincy contract with the US Department of Homeland Security was renewed for another five years and the standards for the provision of religious care were strengthened. The current administration's openness to endorsing alternatives to detention for some migrants allows for optimism in the coming years.

In 2008 we became partners in a new project along the Arizona–Mexico border, the Kino Border Initiative (KBI). As local communities on both sides of the border came together to help vulnerable migrants, the need for a comprehensive reform of the current US immigration policy became ever more apparent. Through our work on the border and inside detention centres, we have told our brothers and sisters that they are not alone.

At a glance

	Kino Border Initiative (KBI)	Detention centres (first half of 2009)
Urgent aid	72,600	
Pastoral		22,412
Shelter (women, children)	245	

The first year of the Kino Border Initiative (KBI) was successful. This bi-national ministry on the [Arizona–Mexico border](#) is a partnership between JRS USA, the Jesuit Provinces of California and Mexico, the Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist, the Archdiocese of Hermosillo and the Diocese of Tucson. In Nogales, Mexico, the KBI ran the Aid Centre for Deported Migrants (CAMDEP) and Casa Nazaret (Nazareth Home). CAMDEP met the pressing needs of penniless deportees while Casa Nazaret provided emergency shelter for deported women and children in crisis.

JRS continued its chaplaincy programme in three US federal detention centres located in [Texas, Arizona, New York](#), and in a Los Angeles county detention centre in [California](#). Pastoral counselling was offered too.

In [Canada](#), awareness-raising and advocacy for forcibly displaced people were the mainstay of JRS activities in Québec. In Toronto, a campaign was intensified to highlight the difficulties facing people at risk in Mexico who apply for asylum in Canada. Also in Toronto, JRS contributed to the work of Romero House, which provides a community, social services and support to newly arrived asylum seekers.



© US-Mexico border. (JRS International)

USA

I couldn't make ends meet

The unaccompanied women and mothers with young children who seek shelter at Casa Nazaret have endured a traumatic migration experience. Many were abandoned in the desert and have memories of being beaten, injured, assaulted and raped during the journey to the US. Others lived in the US for a number of years before being detained and deported. Carmen is one of the women welcomed to Casa Nazaret:

I am from the state of Hidalgo in Mexico. I was born in a very poor family, the eldest of eight children. One time, I don't know why, we were living with my maternal grandfather. At one in the morning, he kicked us out of the house. We left and ended up underneath a tree. My mother cried and cried. I told her, "Don't cry, Mama. When I grow up I am going to work and to build you a two-storey house." I fulfilled this promise; I actually built a house where that tree stood and it has two storeys.

I married and had three children. My husband was not a good father. We separated and I worked to support my children. I became exhausted, I felt like life was really hard and with no way out, I couldn't do it any more. My oldest daughter came up to me and said: "Don't cry, Mama. When I'm older, I am going to work to help you out." Her words touched me deep within my heart and I thought about building my life back up. Fourteen years ago, I left my children with my mother and went to the US to work.

I began to send my mother \$4,000 per month to provide food for her, my father and my children, as well as for the children's schooling. Then I discovered that my daughter, already a teenager, wanted to commit suicide. I had to return to Mexico. I wanted to see my child more than to maintain my safety in the US. When I returned to Mexico, my children gave me great comfort.

But how could I live on a salary of \$100? In Mexico, I had to work eight hours to earn what I could make in the US in 45 minutes. I couldn't make ends meet so I tried to cross into the US. I have already tried twice. But I will not go through the desert again. It is terribly hard. No one can imagine what people suffer there.



© Sr Engracia Robles (centre) and volunteers serve hot meals to more than 200 people every day at the CAMDEP facility in Nogales, Mexico. (Robert Dolan SJ/JRS)

Canada

Deserving of protection

As a prominent police officer in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, Gustavo Gutierrez Masareno led a team investigating feminicidios – notorious unsolved cases of murders of women. In November 2008, he sought refuge in Canada. He shares his story:

I fled my country because I received death threats while I was working in the office of the Procurator General of Justice in the State of Chihuahua. In January 2008, while I was coordinator of a department investigating female homicides, my face appeared all across the city in spectacular billboard ads promoting what was called the New System of Penal Justice. A month later I was put in charge of the northern zone of the region. By May, I was receiving death threats. That was when I left for another state in Mexico. When my family, still in Juárez, started getting visits from armed men, I decided we had to seek protection in Canada.

When I got to Toronto I told the Immigration Officer I wanted to request asylum. I was sent to a jail while they checked my story. After four days it was decided that I was free to go but needed a Canadian citizen to provide a bail deposit. I had the phone number of a person my brother knew; he paid the bail and welcomed me into his home where I stayed until my family arrived in Canada. Soon after, the community of Romero House received us and assisted us greatly, becoming a transforming influence on my family. Together with Fr Jack [Costello] of JRS, they have accompanied us as friends through the whole asylum process.

My claim was refused on first hearing because the judge decided I could seek protection in Mexico City. I appealed the decision in the Federal Court and am waiting for a new hearing. Fr Jack arranged for a meeting with the Archbishop of Toronto, Thomas Collins, who showed great support. I hope for the best in all this uncertainty. But one thing I am certain of: I cannot return to Mexico and expect my family or me to be safe.



© (Canadian Council for Refugees)

Lives on hold

Rakeb Al Rekabi and Asia Taher from Iraq have been living in Canada for 15 years. Bayan and Oban, their two sons, were born in Canada and have Canadian citizenship but Rakeb and Asia don't. They live in limbo: there is a moratorium on deportations to Iraq but their applications, first for refugee status and later for permanent residence on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, were refused. Since 2005, JRS in Québec has been involved, together with other organisations, in a campaign entitled *Des vies en suspens* (Lives on hold). The campaign highlights the plight of people, like Rakeb and Taher, from moratorium countries and demands permanent status for them. In 2009, the campaign advocated for those facing deportation when the government lifted the moratorium on removals to Rwanda, Liberia and Burundi.

glossary of project categories

Advocacy

Protecting the rights of refugees starts on the ground, with legal and other support for asylum applications, access to services, registration, return or resettlement. Another aspect is training or awareness seminars, for public officials, local NGOs and refugees.

Education

The mainstay of JRS activities in most regions, education covers a wide range of formal and informal schooling, including: pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary, special education (especially in Asia), distance education, scholarships, lifeskills, vocational training, adult literacy, computer and language classes, often for adults, extra tuition and revision classes, and education for peace and reconciliation. In Africa and Asia, JRS strengthens the educational system of communities by training teachers and providing them with incentives, by engaging in the construction and equipping of schools and by supporting Parent Teacher Associations.

Emergency relief

The distribution of food and non-food items, such as mattresses and blankets, clothes, seeds and tools; medical treatment; money for transport and referrals. Shelter – tents, housing arrangements, and the rehabilitation and maintenance of dwellings – forms part of this category.

Healthcare

Healthcare includes referrals and payment for medical treatment; services in detention centres; work in clinics and hospitals; food supplementation; health education; HIV/AIDS awareness-raising; staff training.

Livelihoods

This category incorporates activities geared towards self-reliance: ensuring access to employment and land; technical training and assistance; help to set up small businesses by making available funds, grants and credit, as well as tools and other resources. Such initiatives go beyond the economic (self-sufficiency, earning an income) aspect to encompass human (restoring dignity and hope) and social (integration, community) elements.

Pastoral

Pastoral care refers to targeted initiatives – capacity-building among catechists, youth, community leaders and Small Christian Communities – and to wider ministry that reaches thousands. The latter includes liturgical services, including administration of the Sacraments, and pastoral accompaniment, especially of people who are ill, traumatised and bereaved. In detention centres, JRS offers chaplaincy services.

Peace-building

This sector includes reconciliation and reconstruction. Both often – but not exclusively – take place in the context of return. Reconstruction is about restoring war-torn structures while reconciliation dismantles barriers and heals wounded relationships. Related activities include: peace education and training seminars, collaborative leadership workshops, promotion of the value of peace through sports, culture and other activities.

Psychosocial support

Psychosocial support refers to accompaniment and counselling, with the degree of involvement ranging from offering a listening ear to therapy for mental health problems. Landmine survivors, victims of abuse, ex-child soldiers and those who experienced trauma are among those supported. This category forms part of a broader category, *Social Services & Community Development*.

Research

The critical reflection that is JRS research addresses the root causes of conflicts and generates new information about possible durable solutions proposed by the communities concerned. JRS action-research emerges from the project cycle and aims at social and community change.

JRS advocacy

Linked to accompaniment and service, advocacy is an integral part of the JRS mission and of daily activities around the world. An international network, with key positions in Brussels, Geneva, Nairobi, Oxford, Rome and Washington, supports field offices and conducts cross-regional advocacy and research. We highlight some shared areas of concern across JRS:

Urban refugees

Forcibly displaced people in urban settings constantly face protection risks, among them detention, deportation, exploitation and xenophobia. In 2009, JRS combined service and advocacy in urban projects in Southern and Eastern Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. Among the urgent problems tackled: frequent lack of documentation and registration; inadequate and overcrowded housing; difficulties accessing basic services and making a living. Integration and combating xenophobia, key advocacy areas of JRS, remained priorities.

JRS gave feedback in the drafting process of a *UNCHR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas*, published in September 2009; JRS USA joined other organisations to call for concerted action to make the principles voiced in the policy operational.



© (JRS International)



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Legal aid/status determination

Providing legal aid in many countries, JRS challenged unjust policies; called for improved and swifter refugee status determination procedures; advocated for non-refoulement and decried cases of *refoulement* (such as the Uighurs forcibly sent back to China from Cambodia).



© Chad (Don Doll SJ/JRS)

Education

JRS advocated for access to quality education in many countries, especially for girls in Africa. This priority of JRS advocacy reflects its conviction that access to education is a human right and a means to building peace and development.



Food security

Another key advocacy area of JRS, this was a concern across Africa in 2009 but increasingly pertinent elsewhere too, as many people did not have enough food to meet their basic needs, whether in camps, in IDP or in urban contexts. JRS Europe researched destitution among forcibly displaced people.



Detention

Detention remained a pressing concern for JRS worldwide, particularly in Europe, the US, Southern Africa and Asia Pacific. In South Asia, JRS denounced the detention of Tamils fleeing the war zone in Sri Lanka.



Child soldiers

JRS is part of the Coalition to stop the use of Child Soldiers. In Chad and DRC, programmes aimed to reintegrate former child soldiers and to prevent recruitment. In Colombia, JRS denounced the use of children in armed conflict, not least through participation in the Red Hand campaign.



Landmines/cluster bombs

JRS is part of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. JRS Cambodia represented JRS in meetings and, together with other JRS offices in Asia Pacific, raised awareness and lobbied national governments to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which will come into force in August 2010.



Durable solutions

JRS advocated for durable solutions for those in protracted refugee situations; for stateless people; for those with precarious status, such as Colombian refugees in Panama with only temporary protection. The resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees and the future of the Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu were of concern in 2009.

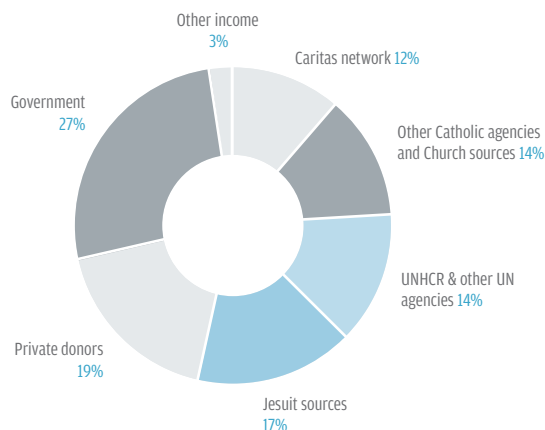


Peace and reconciliation

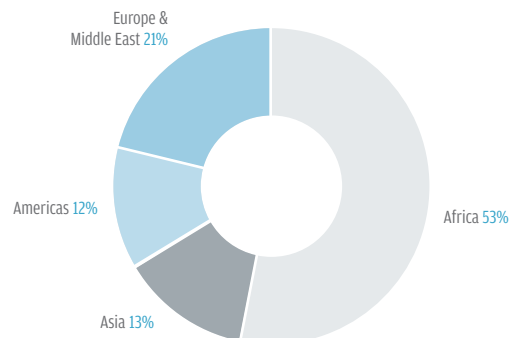
Identified as a priority, this is a developing area of JRS advocacy. In 2009, initiatives included: joining calls for a cessation of hostilities in Sri Lanka and highlighting the devastating impact of the war; peace education targeting rebels, civilian authorities and community leaders in northern CAR.

JRS donors

sources of funding



distribution of expenditure by continent

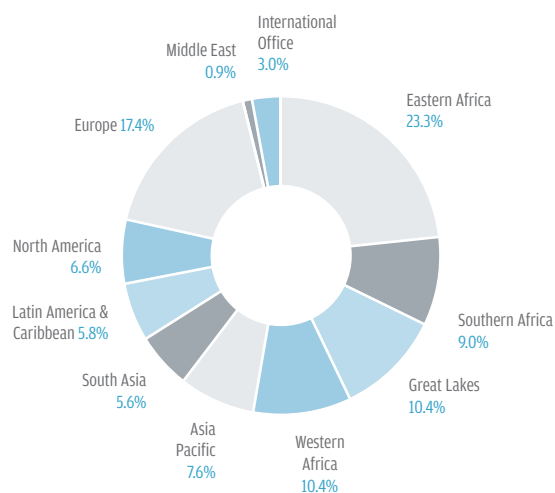


sources of funding world-wide (amount in euro)

Caritas network	2,599,730
Other Catholic agencies and Church sources	3,033,166
UNHCR & other UN Agencies	3,100,759
Jesuit sources	2,873,158
Private donors	4,171,216
Government	6,086,022
Other income	567,489
Total received	22,431,540

Other Catholic agencies and Church sources refers to donations from Catholic Bishops' Conferences, dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic agencies other than the Caritas network;
Private donors include individuals and private foundations;
Other income refers to earning from investments, interest on bank deposits and retail sales from livelihoods projects;
Jesuit sources refer to funds from Jesuit provinces, individual Jesuits and the Jesuit Mission Offices.

distribution of expenditure by region



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Account Number for Euro:

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 SWIFT CODE/BIC: POSOIT22

Account Number for US dollars:

IBAN: IT 97 O 05696 03212 VARUS0003410
 SWIFT CODE/BIC: POSOIT22

"Life has taught us that we must persevere, day after day, and try to be happy. I thank JRS for allowing me to join a team that makes others happy."

Anita, an Iraqi mother, teaches English at St Vartan in Syria

Thank you to all our donors & friends

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