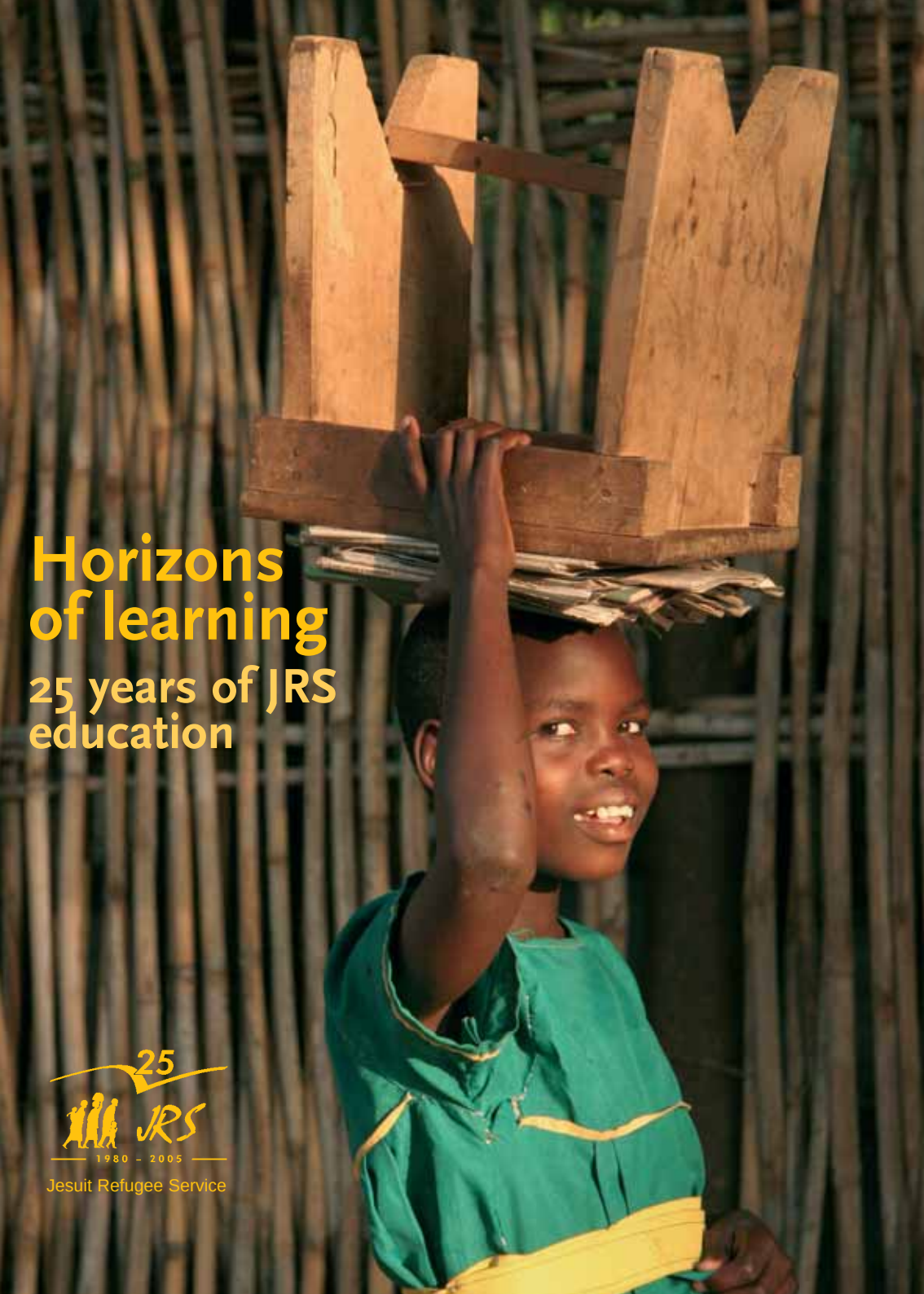

Horizons of learning

25 years of JRS education

25
JRS
1980 – 2005

Jesuit Refugee Service

Horizons of learning
25 years of JRS education

Jesuit Refugee Service

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation with a mission to accompany, serve and plead the cause of refugees and forcibly displaced people. Set up by the Society of Jesus in 1980 and now at work in over 50 countries, the priority of JRS is to accompany refugees whose needs are more urgent or forgotten.

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A student in Tamilnadu, India

Introduction

We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water the seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.
Archbishop Oscar Romero, San Salvador (1917 – 1980)

Why write a book about the approach to education of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)? As an international Catholic organisation reaching out to refugees and displaced people, JRS offers a wealth of diverse services in line with its mission to accompany, serve and defend their cause. Education projects are an integral part of a generic network of initiatives ranging from emergency assistance on the ground to high-level advocacy at national and international levels.

And yet, as JRS marks 25 years of existence, a specialisation in education stands out as a particularly important characteristic of our mission, permeating the life of practically all services offered. JRS has this focus on providing education to refugees, springing from the needs of the refugees and our Ignatian tradition of discernment on how best we can offer our support. JRS workers value this education-based approach because they firmly believe it affirms the humanity of refugees and restores their wounded dignity. Education means planting seeds of hope in the insecure and traumatic present of refugees, seeds which hold future promise. From the asylum seeker in detention who pleads for language classes to the child in Uganda who walks for hours every day to go to school, the urgent need to be fed by this hope and affirmation is one and the same. This is why JRS flanks emergency services like food and shelter with education projects from the very start of its involvement in a given situation.

Provision of at least primary education in all circumstances is universally recognized as an inalienable right to be met at all costs; it is enshrined in international law and continually underscored in global summits and conferences. The goal of universal primary education found a place in the Millennium Development Goals – objectives agreed during world conferences and world summits during the 1990s – to be reached by 2015. Alas, reality reveals there is a long way still to go: at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, it was estimated that more than 113 million of the world's children were not in school. Several specific populations, including children living in war-affected areas, were identified as being particularly at risk. The Global

Survey on Education in Emergencies (2004) reveals that more than 27 million children and youth affected by conflict do not have access to formal education; 90% of them are internally displaced people. And while girls are almost as likely as boys to be enrolled in pre-primary and grade one, their enrolment decreases steadily after that.

Such findings highlight enormous and urgent needs and underscore the crucial importance of education services for refugees and other displaced people. Further, projects should cater for all age brackets, not just children, as currently tends to be the case (the above-mentioned global survey says the majority of internally displaced and refugee children in school are enrolled in the early primary grades). In the 47th session of the International Conference on Education in 2005, it was clearly stated that basic education can no longer be limited to primary education. The number of young people completing primary school is constantly rising. Enrolment at secondary school level in the world has multiplied tenfold over the last 50 years. While secondary school enrolment on a global level has increased from 56% to 77% in the last decade, this masks the reality that millions of young people, particularly in developing countries, finish primary school and are still denied the opportunities to make a living or to continue their education. Furthermore, many do not even complete primary education. Girls and women are particularly affected.

In this global scenario, JRS educators strive to provide a range of services to meet ever growing and diverse needs. The term *educere* literally means "to draw from" and this is precisely what JRS seeks to do, shaping initiatives which maximise the potential inherent in refugees, whatever their age and level of academic achievement. Education takes on its broadest possible meaning beyond formal school projects to embrace endless opportunities for learning. Some of the more universal are described in this book, among them teacher training, scholarships, distance-learning, vocational skills coupled with income generating projects, adult literacy, language classes and peace education. Initiatives focus on the holistic development of the person, emphasising *learning to be* beyond merely *learning to do*, and promoting positive values and behaviour. An element of education finds a place in all projects offered by JRS, from health promotion to sensitising children about their rights to teaching respect for the environment.

Given the plurality of refugee populations and the settings in which they find themselves – refugee camps, detention centres, prisons, cities, war zones – as

well as the diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds in which JRS is at work, our educational projects adopted vary widely even if the end goal is ultimately the same. No one project is like the other. There are no blueprints and resourcefulness and ingenuity play a large part in setting up projects to meet present needs and to circumvent obstacles.

However, despite the inevitable differences, there is what we may define as a universal *way of proceeding* in the JRS approach to education. Projects across the world may differ one from the other, but ultimately they are underpinned by a shared set of principles and criteria which reflect the basic mandate of JRS and which have developed over the years. Chief among them is a stress on working in partnership with refugees and offering them the necessary support and training to enable them to eventually take over projects themselves. Another criterion is a preferential option for refugees who in some way are at risk of being vulnerable or disadvantaged, like women, landmine survivors, and those who are physically challenged.

This book aims to trace this way of proceeding by giving a snapshot of the different types of education services implemented by JRS. This is done by drawing on specific examples of projects which we value because the mission of JRS has been lived in them. The projects described in this book represent the continued dedication and professional efforts of thousands of refugees and JRS workers who implement similar services daily across the world. This book is a celebration of those efforts.

School children in Salala camp for internally displaced people

Chapter One

Education: hope for the future

School projects

Young refugees carry with them a big burden from the past. But they also carry within them the ability to surmount obstacles and to really make something of the future. The work of JRS and other organisations is to ensure that we help them in whatever way we can. It need not be a future without hope.
John Dardis SJ
Former Director, JRS Europe

Education never fails to bring hope. This is the primary reason for the commitment of JRS to education, that it lights a candle in places of darkness like refugee camps and detention centres. The process of learning instils pride in refugees for what they achieve in their – often seemingly hopeless – present and gives them valid expectations for a better future. This tangible hope is life-giving, because it spurs refugees beyond mere survival to being fully alive.

Education has the potential to bring about radical changes in the status quo of powerlessness and despair gripping many refugees. Francis Leong, former country director of JRS Zambia, put his finger on the transforming power of education when he described it as *healing and enabling not only for the children but for the refugee community as a whole*. Writing about the setting up of emergency schools in a border village amid an influx of new arrivals from Angola, Mr Leong said the initiative enabled refugees *in the sense that through the establishment of makeshift schools, they were able to look beyond the trauma of dislocation and exile*.

A school, however makeshift, does introduce a comfortable and reassuring sense of normalcy to the unnatural and often very limited environment of exile. It sets attainable goals in the here-and-now – like a school-leaving certificate – and empowers parents to be responsible for their children's destiny, and their own.

These goals, which offer "something" to take "somewhere" makes the hoped-for future present, because their ultimate end is the acquisition of knowledge and skills to use in the country of origin or of resettlement. And this is

achieved in very practical ways, by drawing on today's perceived strengths and needs to shape a brighter tomorrow.

1. A tangible thirst for education

In focusing on education, JRS teams worldwide respond to a strongly felt need of uprooted people. Former JRS International director, Mark Raper SJ, witnessed the expression of parents' anxiety about their children's schooling over and over again. *Visiting newly arrived refugees, whether in the Krajina district across from the Bihac pocket in Bosnia, or at the Burma border close to Mae Hong Song in Thailand, I would regularly find them most pre-occupied about their children's future. The first job in resilient communities was to get the school going.* Hence, even in emergency situations, the priority of many JRS teams is nearly always education. In Sri Lanka, one of the first projects set up by JRS in Jaffna just after the 2002 ceasefire was a temporary class amid the debris of a destroyed church with mines scattered around.

Just as education promises hope in exile, its absence often prompts despair. Refugees who are illiterate feel this shortcoming more keenly than ever, perhaps because it renders them more powerless. If wrenched away from school in order to flee, refugees bitterly resent their exile as precious opportunities for education are lost. Asylum seekers detained in western countries often face this predicament, they become obsessed with the frittering away of time. In Malta, Wedeb, a 15-year-old girl from Eritrea, was detained for more than a year before the government adopted a policy to free unaccompanied minors. She would sit crouched in the corner of her crowded dormitory, clenched fists defiantly pressed against her cheeks to stem tears of helplessness as she said angrily: *The days are passing so fast, already so many months have gone by and we have learned nothing. What future is there for us when we leave?*

The worry over wasted time is echoed by refugees in totally different circumstances. *Our children have missed too much school,* Sudanese refugees from Darfur told Lolín Menéndez RSCJ in Chad. Sr Menéndez, for many years JRS education resource person for Africa, recalls her visit among the anxious parents: *JRS personnel met, from the very beginning, parents and teachers eager for the children to start school. Enrolment lists were drawn up long before shelters were up. There was an insistence that school must start and go on until the end of the year.*

The thirst of refugees for education often prevails over more urgent needs, even food. The JRS International director, Lluís Magriñà SJ, saw this for him-

self on a visit to Nimule in southern Sudan, when a JRS team visited a group of newly arrived displaced people near the village. *There were around 3,000 people, mainly women, children and elderly. It was, they told us, the fourth time they had to move because of bombings. They said they had no food for two weeks, that they were sick and needed medication. They wanted to start school... actually they had already started; there was a blackboard under a tree. They ardently wanted to show us much how they value education.* Fr Raper witnessed a similar scenario when he met Sudanese refugees in neighbouring Uganda: *Thousands of Sudanese were setting up camp after weeks of walking. I chanced upon a man surrounded by children, and asked what would help him most. 'A blackboard and some chalk', he replied. He was a teacher, concerned only that the children's education should continue.*

Across the world, the same single-minded drive to persevere with education even in the bleakest circumstances was poetically described by Tek Bahadur Chetri, a Bhutanese refugee in Nepal. *In 1990, we pitched our tents on the bank of river Maidhar, eastern Nepal. Even as the children cried for food and the old shed silent tears helplessly, the Bhutanese elders and youth members of the Bhutan Student Union took up the challenge of educating the younger ones as they felt it was their responsibility. The sand on the river bank was our blackboard and paper, our fingers the pencils.* Three years later, Mr Chetri would join the education project set up in the camps by JRS, Caritas and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), catering for over 40,000 children in dozens of schools.

2. Setting up schools in refugee camps

Indeed, when JRS teams arrive in refugee camps, they often find that education initiatives are already under way. One of the first places identified in a camp is a place with more shade, with tree stumps to serve as seats for pupils, and let the classes begin. Teachers do not wait for books and pencils, or for formation, either. Men and women volunteer to share what they once learned. JRS teams are invited to participate in such endeavours, to provide logistical, training and financial support to enable education to get under way on a sound footing. The focus tends towards formal education programmes at primary level, especially during the emergency stages, in partnership with UNHCR and concerned Ministries of Education. This first step addresses the needs of school-age children, who generally comprise the majority of a camp's population.

Secondary schools are also set up or supported by JRS in some camps – in Namibia, for example, JRS began the secondary school in Osire camp – however maintaining such structures which call for qualified personnel and funding tends to be more challenging than setting up primary school services. Opportunities for secondary-level education are not guaranteed in camps and are far more limited. They usually depend on the extent of involvement that the host country allows UNHCR and on what the UN agency is prepared to offer.

Adjumani, northern Uganda

Among the longest-running JRS education projects in camps, we find the programme in Adjumani, northern Uganda, operational since 1993 among hundreds of thousands of refugees from Sudan's civil war in the south. The following description of the early days of the programme by Virginia Hasson RSM, the first project director for JRS Adjumani, paints a typical picture of the beginning of an education project in a camp:

The refugees had already organized schools in each of the camps. When JRS arrived (1993), there were about 18 primary schools. The Ugandan Ministry of Education was willing to recognize these schools as emergency schools that could follow the Ugandan curriculum and where pupils could sit for the school-leaving examinations. The teachers and students were focused and determined to learn well. Despite the fact that the schools were temporary structures or simply classes taught in the shade of trees, refugee students studied diligently.

Nursery school education also grew in leaps and bounds. There were three nursery schools when JRS arrived and 18 by the end of the first year. Eventually almost every settlement would have a nursery school. The understanding was that refugees would set up their own nursery school. Once it was established, JRS would assist in teacher-training and provide porridge for the children. The porridge was a great draw, an indicator that these little ones were often hungry. The schools were for children aged between three and six. A frequently poignant sight would be children trying to sneak in their two-year old siblings so they could get porridge too.

Early days in Adjumani, Uganda ©*Michael Coyne*

The Adjumani project highlights the proactive role played by refugees and the emphasis on collaboration, a universal principle underlying JRS education projects, which derives from our fundamental mission to accompany refugees rather than to hand down services to them. Many a time, parents have constructed school buildings with their own hands in refugee camps in Africa and Asia, so their children may benefit from projects implemented with JRS. From the start of the Adjumani programme, there was always the idea that the schools belonged to parents and that they were the responsibility of the community. In line with this philosophy, JRS sought to draw on the rich experience found among the refugees. Continues Sr Hasson:

Fortunately, there was a well-respected Sudanese teacher who was a tremendous assistance to education projects. Augustine served as school supervisor and eventually other supervisors were appointed. Together with the head teachers, they were responsible for the appointment of teachers as well as overseeing the curriculum. JRS educators assumed the roles of consultants so that both primary and nursery schools remained under the jurisdiction of the refugees themselves.

3. Teacher-training

Adjumani, northern Uganda

The evolvement of the role of JRS staff in Adjumani in response to the readiness of refugee educators to take responsibility is a sure mark of the programme's success. This development was possible thanks to an all-important component of JRS education projects worldwide: teacher-training, considered so crucial in JRS that Sr Menéndez called it *our most important contribution* in this sphere, and an an *essential element of every formal education project*. Every JRS education programme, no matter at what level, is accompanied by opportunities for teacher formation. When JRS first went to Adjumani in 1993, only a handful of teachers were qualified. Eleven years on, over 73% of teachers were trained and qualified. Thanks to fruitful professional formation over the years, refugees can now look within their ranks for professional guidance in managing schools and ensuring that their children receive quality education.
This turnaround was not achieved lightly: refugee teachers struggle against heavy odds to learn. Many do not meet the minimum requirements of their governments to be considered *qualified*. It is not hard to see why: teachers in camps often come from countries where war has disrupted the education system, where there has been no teacher formation because of civil strife. Such countries are too fragmented to offer a unified curriculum, or else they divert

their resources to the war effort to the detriment of educational (and other) development. To compound the difficulties facing refugee teachers, host countries sometimes impose their own unfamiliar curriculum. Despite the multiple challenges facing them, teachers are eager to go ahead with education. Says Sr Menéndez: *We find often among refugees that those who have had some years of school offer to teach those who have had less or none. Sometimes there is good will but little pedagogical background. The time of exile sometimes acts as a catalyst by exposing people to new ways of thinking and providing alternatives to rote learning while acquiring professional formation.*

JRS input to bring about this transformation includes provision of in-service seminars, opportunities for micro-teaching and demonstration lessons by experienced teachers, or longer workshops during holidays (often with the assistance of personnel from the local Ministry of Education). Supervision of teachers in their daily routine, provision of manuals and teaching aids as well as instruction on their use, are other priorities. In some cases JRS has set up professional libraries or resource centres where teachers can borrow visual aids and other learning materials.

In Adjumani, JRS focused on in-service training; UNHCR provided an incentive for teachers and JRS devised a scale whereby trained teachers received more than untrained teachers. This prompted trained teachers to come forward and it also encouraged unqualified teachers to improve their competence. Says Saluwen S. Yoasa, primary coordinator for JRS Adjumani: *The teachers themselves value the courses and have always requested attendance certificates. They consider these certificates important for improving their prospects of employment in Sudan when they go back*. Some teachers have gone even further and become fully qualified: in the Ugandan context, this means at least successful completion of a prescribed two-year teacher-training course in a recognized college.

From the perspective of project implementers, teacher-training calls for hard work and perseverance, especially when the staff turnover in schools is high and basic in-service courses have to be conducted from scratch for new recruits. At times, the success of formation could be a double-edged sword, when trained teachers change jobs to get better paid positions, including with NGOs. The risk is higher in countries where refugees are allowed to work outside the camps and financial incentives for teachers in camp schools are lower than salaries offered elsewhere. JRS personnel managing the Bhutanese Refugee Education

Programme in camps in Nepal are confronted with this difficulty: *Local schools manage to lure many trained teachers. The task of training new teachers is a painstaking effort. A programme for newly appointed teachers is conducted every year along with a number of workshops on the student-teacher relationship.*

Despite the challenges, teacher-training is one of the single most crucial aspects of JRS education programmes. Countless teachers do give more than they receive as they make a substantial contribution to improving the quality of education. In Nepal, the JRS team readily notes: *The teachers' sense of responsibility is high, as it is their duty to shape the future of their country and community, because the students are torch bearers and future leaders.* Ultimately, the beauty of teacher-training – and indeed of a project which grows with the refugees, as in Adjumani and Nepal – is reflected in the emergence of an educated generation. What greater sign of hope could there be? *The number of students who completed primary education through the support of JRS and who went on to colleges and universities is now in the thousands, says Mr Yoasa of Adjumani. Refugees consider them as community resources. They are now earning an income and are in turn supporting their families and younger brothers and sisters in their studies.*

Teacher-training is given prominence by JRS teams across the world. In the southern Indian state of Tamilnadu, for example, JRS runs a network of education programmes and formation takes priority. Vinny Joseph SJ, former director of JRS India who set up the network, is adamant about this. Around 400 teachers are involved in educating the camp children. They are all Sri Lankan refugees with minimal educational qualifications and professional training. Since we don't have qualified teachers, we organize regular training for teachers working in the pre-schools, evening tuition centres and in regular schools. Fr Joseph moved to take up the post of director of JRS Sri Lanka in 2002, and he lost no time in providing training for teachers in schools for children displaced by the island's protracted civil war.

Mae Hong Song, Thai-Burma border

Another JRS education project where teacher-training has yielded highly satisfactory outcomes is found in Mae Hong Song on the Thai-Burma border. This programme is operational in two camps sheltering nearly 50,000 Burmese refugees who have been in exile for some 15 years. It started in 1997 after an assessment by the Karenni Education Department (KnED) led to the launching of the Karenni Education Programme with JRS (the Karenni are one of Burma's persecuted ethnic minorities). Gaye Lennon RSM, JRS proj-

ect director, recalls: *JRS opted to put personnel and resources at the disposal of the Mon (another ethnic community) and Karenni communities for teacher-training and the general upgrading of schools. In the early years, time and energy was spent training teachers to raise the standard of education in the camps. This was not an easy task as many teachers had not completed their own primary education.* The efforts paid off: in 1997, there were approximately 2,700 students and 83 teachers. By 2004 these numbers had shot up: there were 7,046 students in primary, middle and high school and 375 teachers.

4. An all-inclusive approach: catering for children with special needs.

Another thrust of the Mae Hong Son programme is provision of a more inclusive education system. A community-based needs assessment revealed 8% of children were totally excluded from education due to a disability. Iodine deficiency and mental retardation have been identified as problems among the Karenni, together with Vitamin A deficiency which could lead to measles and possible blindness. Sue Castle, project manager for JRS in Mae Hong Son, says a special education programme was drawn up to give children with physical and learning difficulties the chance to go to school. *The project has been designed to provide students with special needs with access to a trained assistant. All excluded students with special needs will have the opportunity to attend specialist classes and to participate in a reintegration programme.*

The special education project offers hope to children in the Karenni camps and inside Karenni State (in Burma). Refugees trained in project management and training facilitation have expressed the desire to start similar projects on their return home to Karenni. Continues Ms Castle: *It is the first time that Karenni have been taught specialist skills such as Burmese Braille, and personnel are eager to share this knowledge. The special assistants receive training on community health, combating domestic violence and promoting gender awareness in addition to sessions on the disabilities they are likely to encounter. This covers a broad range of support to special needs children and their families.*

Damak, Nepal

In Nepal too, inclusive education is an integral part of the extensive Bhutanese Refugee Education Programme (BREP) managed by JRS in seven camps. Each year around 700 Bhutanese children with special needs are enrolled in school. This includes children with hearing and speech impairments, blindness and low vision and those challenged physically or mentally.

Beginning of the school day for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal ©*Mark Raper SJ/JRS*

Support teachers equip children with curriculum and communication skills including Braille and sign language. Teachers from seven different camps are especially trained by the Nepal Association for the Welfare of the Blind, the Special School for Mentally Challenged and other centres in Kathmandu.

5. An irreplaceable contribution

The education projects among Karenni refugees in Thailand and Bhutanese refugees in Nepal unfold in close collaboration with the community leadership, who endeavour to build a strong democratic civil society in the hope of eventual return to their homeland. Hence, education is rooted in a vision of repatriation and rebuilding a new community. So it is dear to refugees because it is somehow linked to the hope of returning home, especially when the learning process draws on refugees' linguistic and cultural traditions.

In Nepal, where Bhutanese refugees endure long-drawn out exile, ties with their homeland are maintained even if prospects of repatriation appear bleak. *Education for repatriation is integrated in the curriculum of Bhutanese refugee children. At first, children follow the same system as in Bhutan*, says Tek Bahadur Chetri of the BREP. *Students study the geography and history of Bhutan, approved by the government of Nepal as part of the school syllabus. The medium of instruction is English with Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan and Nepali is also taught. From class 10, children follow the education system of Nepal.* The culture and tradition of Bhutan is kept alive through national dance and music.

All the experiences shared in this chapter vividly illustrate how education is a sure sign of hope. Indeed, countless JRS workers are convinced education plays an irreplaceable role not only in the lives of individual refugees but also of the camp itself. This makes sense when one thinks of a potential scenario of thousands of youth with nothing to occupy or motivate them. Christophe Renders SJ, who spent two years in camps in Bukavu, DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo), for Rwandan refugees, is unequivocal: Schools are not a luxury, but a vital need for all the camp, for its rhythm and structure. Through schools one is open to the whole world. François Chanterie SJ goes further, claiming that camp life may actually improve people's chances for education:

It has been said that for many refugees, living in a camp offers an opportunity to study in better conditions than at home. Such an opinion may sound cynical, but after eight years working in camps in southern Africa, I fully subscribe to this opinion.

Education makes sense in the context of reality in a camp where refugees often have nothing to do but hang around, their sense of responsibility dulled from having to depend totally on others for their most basic needs. Many refugees arrive to huge camps from villages, and living in anonymous circumstances is something new, as is the disruption of traditional family patterns.
Going to school may fulfil a dream of both teachers and students in camps. War has destroyed their lives to an extent, but now they show they are not defeated. Teachers want status. Students want to be taken seriously in their willingness to study. Many refugees are aware they would ever have been able to attend secondary school in their own country, but here, in the refugee camps, they have a chance to set up the school themselves. The dream of going to school becomes reality in the camp.

A poignant testimony to the value of schools comes from Maurice Niwese, a former teacher in the camp schools in Bukavu, now researcher at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium:

In 1994, I was studying literature at the national university of Rwanda (UNR). For four years, a fratricidal war between rebels and government forces had ravaged the country. The situation worsened on 6 April 1994, when the airplane carrying the-then Rwandan president, Juvenal Habyarimana, exploded as it tried to land in the airport of Kigali. The assassination was the first step towards a genocide which cost the life of hundreds of thousands of people in just 100 days. In July 1994, the rebel forces took power and more than two million Rwandans fled to neighbouring countries. I am one of those who sought protection in the camps of eastern Zaire.

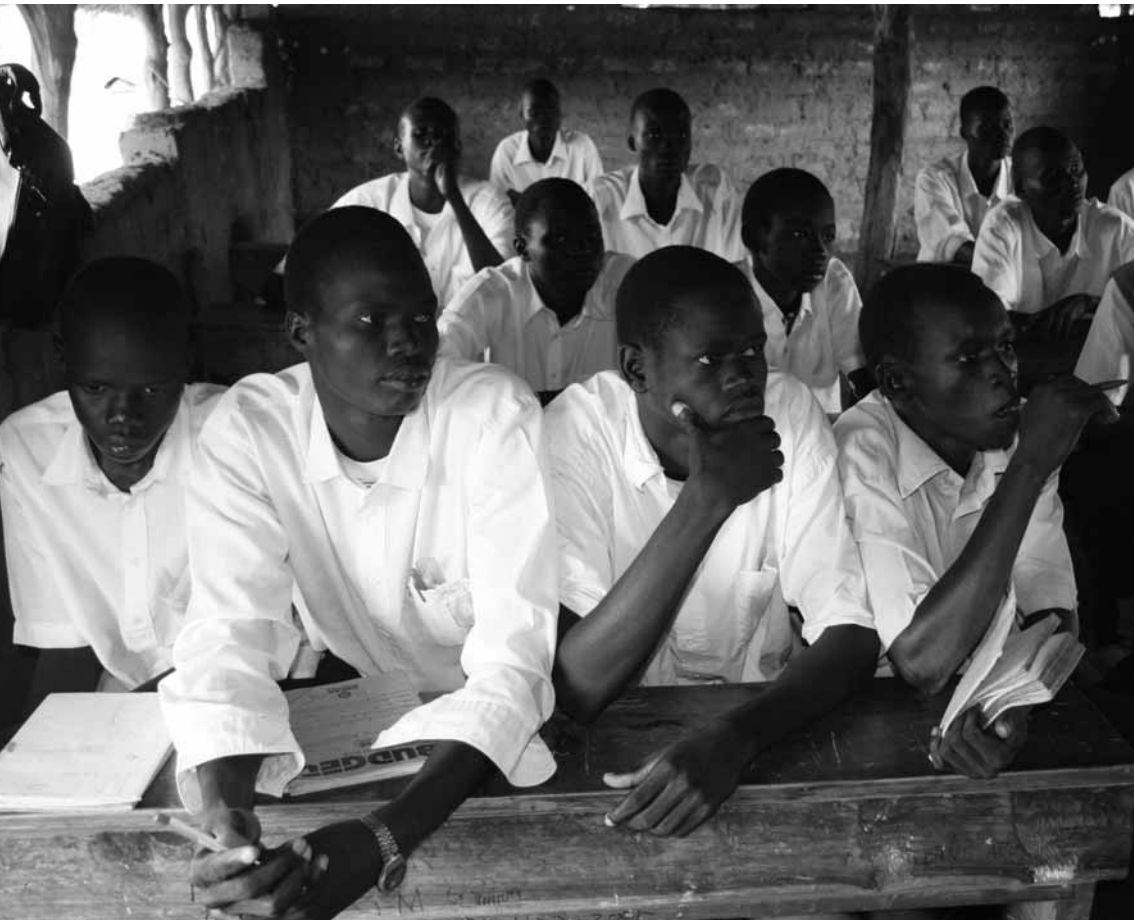
We came from different backgrounds: there were peasants thrown out of their lands, civil servants expelled from their offices, students without hope of going back to school. Families were separated and many people disappeared, there were epidemics, lack of food, and trauma. This situation would last several months until humanitarian workers came to our aid.

At that time the government of Zaire did not allow development of educational and cultural initiatives in the camps. I wonder why UNHCR did not provide any solution. We had to organise educational activities in a clandestine way, so government officials would not see us.
JRS understood from the beginning that we, refugees are not only flesh: we need to feed our spirit to attain dignity. Otherwise we could become monsters, unbalanced human beings. Between 1995 and 1996 I worked as a secondary school teacher in Nyakavogo camp in Bukavu, supported by Caritas under the coordination of JRS.

JRS followed up teachers with training and salaries, helped set up educational programmes and supporting sport activities which brought together students from different camps. JRS was responsible for primary and secondary education as well as informal education. This intervention made it possible to many children and youth to escape idleness and to continue studying in exile. The younger ones learnt to read, write and to do sums. For us teachers, the fact of getting monthly allowances was very important, since many families were able to live from them. JRS workers were very committed and often visited us in our hidden schools under plastic sheeting. We taught small groups of students since there was not much space.

I do not want to go back to such difficult memories which are part of my life. I want to share something with you. Back in Rwanda and later in Belgium I met some students who were at school in the Bukavu camps when I worked as a teacher with JRS. Those I met in Rwanda had been in Tingi Tingi camp and back in Rwanda, they were the best students in the school. In Belgium my former students – many are now my colleagues - have no difficulties in continuing their studies in the Belgian educational system. They are all at university and often remember with pride the education they received with the support of organisations like JRS.

Small wonder, then, that education is described as a "life-saving activity", an act of faith in the future and a beacon of hope in the bleak present of refugees. Wherever they are, refugees do not waste time in making this hope real for themselves, as consistently testified by outcomes which leave JRS workers proud and even amazed. Time and again, JRS personnel have testified to the outstanding performance of their students, as Maurice did in his touching encounter with former refugee students from Bukavu in Belgium. Sr Hasson recalls about Adjumani: *When the time came for them to take the examinations, refugee students did very well and even surpassed students from local Ugandan schools*. She would write virtually the same thing about internally displaced students Khartoum: *The children in the emergency schools did significantly better than those in better-resourced government schools*. In Malta, JRS got permission for detained asylum seekers to attend local primary and secondary school. The boys from Somalia, Iraq and Eritrea were illiterate, yet their teachers were amazed by their voracious thirst for knowledge – as opposed to their Maltese peers – and by their ability in learning to read and write not only in English but also in Maltese. *When we were told the boys were coming, we had to prepare a special programme for them, and I was none too happy about it*, one teacher said. *But now I would do anything for those boys, they are a joy to teach. JRS educators often describe themselves as passionate about education*. How could they be otherwise?



Secondary school in Nimule, south Sudan

Chapter Two

Alternative approaches in post-primary education

I worked hard in primary school in Nimule in southern Sudan, but due to the war, I fell behind and did not manage to get a sponsorship to continue my studies. My uncle started to sponsor my education in Adjumani, Uganda, and I got a primary school-leaving certificate. But he was killed in 1998 so I returned to Nimule where I was accepted as a teacher while continuing my own education. I was forcibly recruited by the Sudan People's Liberation Army and taken back across the border to Gulu. I managed to escape, but I cannot return to Nimule, so where can I go to school? I never had a chance to get a proper education. If I settle down and I am able to study, I hope I will do well.
19-year-old Deng, a Sudanese refugee in Adjumani, Uganda

The fluid and uncertain existence of refugees essentially calls for flexibility in shaping projects to meet their needs. There must be a willingness to "think outside the box", to borrow a term used by educators when describing the search for alternatives to standard education systems.

Implementing education projects for refugees in whatever setting is rarely a straightforward business. Hard work is called for, as well as collaboration with UNHCR, other organisations, host governments and above all with the refugees themselves. Other attributes and attitudes are well nigh indispensable, not least perseverance and resourcefulness to adapt projects to fit unstable and limited conditions and to circumvent obstacles and constraints. The generation of alternative solutions is called for especially when formal schools are not an option either because they have been ruled out in the circumstances or because they do not fit the needs at hand.

This is often the case in the provision of further education for refugee students. Although universal access to primary schooling is given high priority in a camp context, provision of education beyond this level is not guaranteed. Only 6% of all refugee students are enrolled in secondary education; for internally displaced youth even fewer opportunities exist, according to the Global

Survey on Education in Emergencies, 2004. Most schools require fees which are impossible for refugee parents to pay. Post-primary education in camps hinges on agreements reached between the UN and host country governments. Sometimes specific programmes of formal secondary education for refugees are not permitted by the host government. UNHCR does support the continued education of a small portion of primary school leavers but supply falls far short of demand as an increasing number of students excel at primary level. UNHCR tries to address the problem by stressing vocational training (addressed in Chapter Three).

How to meet the needs of millions of uprooted people when options are severely limited? Offering post-primary education in camps in underdeveloped countries is neither easy nor clear-cut. Several factors must be weighed, among them positive discrimination on behalf of girls, extending the benefits of a secondary programme to the national population, and the choice between providing cost-sharing alternatives versus enabling a few bright students.

There is no question that secondary education is vital for many youth, going beyond the basic grounding given in primary school to offer orientation towards specific skills and job opportunities. This is especially so for students who have already reached a certain level of education: they find themselves at a loss when their studies are interrupted abruptly, either by war and flight or because there are not enough resources in exile. They have no inkling, when, if ever, they will be able to resume their education. Those who have met refugees facing this plight are surely aware of their despondency, like Jean (not his real name) a Congolese journalist detained in a European Union country. He was studying for a PHD in social communications at the Catholic University of Kinshasa before he had to escape because he broadcast radio programmes denouncing the government's role in the war in Ituri. He would shake his head sadly as he repeated to the JRS volunteers who visited the detention centre: *At home, I was used to doing something all the time: reading, writing, or studying. Now I have lost everything, all we do here is eat and sleep.*

Provision of some form of higher education could well be decisive not only for learners themselves, but for their communities too. This is true from an economic point of view, because a society with well educated members clearly has better chances of growth and prosperity, and it is equally valid from a socialisation perspective, because education offers youth sorely needed hope and purpose. Young refugees are clearly vulnerable as they grapple with a

traumatic past, a deprived and uncertain present and as their dreams for the future are brought to nought. At a crucial stage of psychological development, they need support and stability to make a healthy transition from childhood to adulthood. However, the encouragement they need is not found easily in overcrowded camps where communal norms and structures crumble and values once proudly upheld are threatened. Despair, frustration and aimlessness set in, often leading to a host of social problems, among them a high prevalence of teenage pregnancies, early marriages, crime and drug addiction, HIV/AIDS and recruitment in armed groups.

1. Scholarships: a rewarding approach

Despite the multiple problems and setbacks they face, refugees who have already enjoyed a measure of education are usually eager to identify means to continue studying. One popular option to meet this need is scholarships. JRS organises scholarships for secondary and post-secondary education mainly – but not exclusively – for refugees living in urban areas. Scholarship programmes have been set up in Harare, Lusaka, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Lilongwe, Nairobi, and Addis Ababa, Roxanne Schares SSND, education resource person for JRS in Africa, says this method is also resorted to by JRS teams in camps: *Where there are no secondary schools in the camps, JRS has given out scholarships for students to attend national secondary schools. This has happened in Rwanda and Namibia, for example, and over time in these two countries secondary schools were begun by JRS.*

Scholarships are offered by JRS in several other places across the world. In Indonesia, for example, JRS provides scholarships for students to join local schools, as formal education is often unavailable for children in settlements for displaced people, especially for those who have already passed through primary level. Without support, destitute refugee families would be unable to afford to send their children to local schools. In Nepal, some refugee students are given post-secondary scholarships to study in India or in Nepal itself.

The downside of scholarships is that they are expensive, which means they are available for a relatively small number of refugees. However, they do make all the difference for those who benefit, as Joe Hampson SJ, former JRS regional director for Southern Africa, said: *Scholarships are expensive but they provide that extra help without which refugees would drop out. In certain cases it really makes the difference, like the bursary funds JRS provides in South Africa. They mean access to and sustainability of education.*

Kenya

The JRS scholarship programme in Kenya started in 1991 and at present it supports students at university level and for higher vocational training. Students are chosen from applications submitted by refugees living in Kakuma and Dadaab camps as well as in Nairobi. The scholarships cover college tuition fees as well as students' rent and living expenses. Computing, information technology, accountancy and secretarial skills are some subjects taken by scholarship students, in courses ranging from two to four years.

Initially, JRS set up the scholarship programme so promising students who completed primary level in Kakuma camp, northern Kenya, would be able to attend schools in the district of Turkana, where the camp is located. Eventually secondary schools were opened in the camp itself, but the scholarship programme remained in place to provide an incentive and to offer opportunities beyond those available in the camp.

Refugees of the JRS programme in Kakuma have regular meetings with JRS staff during school holidays to discuss their progress and problems. They are expected to assist the community in some way, for instance, by organizing recreational activities for children, as a way of expressing their willingness to put their "privilege" at the service of others.

Bosnia and Croatia

One long-term JRS project which met the needs of thousands of students from college and university unfolded in times of war and turbulence in Croatia and Bosnia. From the early nineties, when war broke out in the region formerly making up the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, JRS was immediately present among refugees and displaced people in war zones and in more secure areas, offering emergency assistance and shelter. Even in such chaotic times, JRS personnel swiftly discerned that education should take priority. A scholarship programme was identified as the optimal means of ensuring the continued tuition of students displaced across the region. Stjepan Kusan SJ, regional director of JRS Southeast Europe, recalls: *Many students were cut off from their parents, unable to contact them for years and not receiving any kind of support. They found themselves in a desperate situation. We thought the best way to help these young people would be to help them start or complete their studies.* A 1993 report of JRS activities noted that the scholarship programme *attracted much interest* because it was *unique in that we are the only ones to take up this challenge.*

In the ensuing decade, JRS gave scholarships to more than 1,000 refugees and internally displaced people from all three ethnic minorities (Croatian, Bosnian, Serb), acting as implementing partner of the Michiko Inukai Foundation (MIF). Michiko Inukai, the Japanese best-selling author behind the MIF and a faithful sponsor of JRS educational initiatives, deserves special mention simply because she is an embodiment of the life-giving hope which education gives to refugees. Michiko ploughs all the profits from her books into funding refugee education, because she is determined to repay the kindness she experienced when she was a refugee herself after World War II. Back then, benefactors funded her theology studies in the US through a Jesuit community in Tokyo. *It is like a circle. I asked the Jesuits who had given me the scholarship and air ticket, and I was told my beneficiaries did not want to reveal who they were, but wished me to do the same for the most needy when I became independent. That is, to give scholarships.*

And this is precisely what Michiko has spent her entire life doing: thanks to her, thousands of refugees worldwide today have received schooling. Many of these were assisted through JRS Southeast Europe as Michiko worked with the regional director, Fr Kusan, to identify and fund youth in need. Of her collaboration with JRS, she says: *Through long years of unspeakable sufferings, and also of grace and hope, it was the refugees themselves who supported our project, first in Croatia, then in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Yugoslavia, by their enthusiasm to learn. Through them, I have learned the meaning of Christian hope.*

One grateful student of the scholarship programme is Ines Santarius, who was displaced in Croatia from her home town of Sarajevo in Bosnia in 1992, when she was 18. *We had to start all over again, my parents were in their fifties and it was very hard for us. I started to attend a course in mechanical engineering at university in Zagreb. My parents wanted to help me but it was a huge financial struggle to support my studies. I met Fr Kusan and he suggested a scholarship. The scholarship gave me hope, because someone besides my parents trusted in me and in my success, and it meant I could afford to study.*

2. Towards wholeness: a comprehensive approach

In setting up educational programmes for youth, JRS personnel are always confronted with needs which exceed the remit of purely academic services. JRS teams worldwide constantly encounter multiple and urgent needs of youth which cry out to be met. No one project can meet all requirements and wants; no set of goals and objectives can include everything. However the

experience of JRS reveals that an approach which maximises the strengths of youth and reinforces positive values and self-esteem goes a long way. In such a scenario, the actual skills or knowledge taught become a means to the end of making youth whole.

Tamilnadu, India

When JRS personnel first went to camps for Sri Lankan refugees in Tamilnadu in the early nineties, they quickly picked up a strong sense of prevalent discontent and dejection. Vinny Joseph SJ, former director of JRS India painted a dismal picture of life in the small camps scattered along the coastal line of the southern Indian state. *Refugees find very hard to cope with the problems they face in the camps. They feel that a decade-long stay in alien land has diluted their values and cultural heritage. For youth, life is far from rosy. Many parents seem to have lost all control of their children and boys especially do as they please. It creates a problem of lawlessness in the camp society. The youth, meanwhile, feel they are neglected by NGOs and religious groups working with refugees.*

The refugee youth attended local state-run secondary schools (except for a period between 1992 and 1996 for political reasons), however the camps had low literacy rate and high drop-out rates. JRS personnel decided to make what they termed *value-based education for all refugee children and youth* the goal of all their programmes. To this end, they created a wide-ranging network of complementary services centred round academic instruction and designed to draw creativity and maximum participation from students. Evening tuition centres were set up in practically all the camps (nearly 100) as were student organisations, *Manavar Mandram*. District-wide seminars and summer camps in supplementary education became regular activities, along with special workshops in public speaking and writing. Many of these activities are ongoing and all draw thousands of students every time. All initiatives have a strong life-skills component with basic psychology and counselling, personal development and leadership skills.

The crowning glory of the project is a monthly magazine produced by refugee youth, Manavar Vidiyal. Around 300 students contribute articles to each edition. Says Fr Joseph: *'Manavar Vidiyal' brings out the hidden talents of students and boosts the formation of students and teachers. It is circulated among all the 'Manavar Mandrams' and the youth themselves. It includes general knowledge, letters, poems, drawings, stories, jokes, and a How-to-learn English section. The magazine has a warm reception among students and their parents and it is even broad-*

cast on air by the TRT London Time Service for Tamil audiences across the world. The talents of our children are much appreciated by Tamil listeners in European countries.

Early school leavers are catered for especially, with informal technical skills courses for boys offered in collaboration with local training institutions, and a wide-ranging *Grihini* life-skills course for girls (covered more fully in chapter three).

Hundreds of children and youth deemed to be vulnerable are placed by JRS in schools and colleges in the local community; some are sponsored right through university.

Fr Joseph says the programme has made a big difference in the life and future prospects of youth and by extension, of the rest of the refugee community. *The strategy has had a great impact on students: education has become the main lifeline of the people. Today, more than 600 students are enrolled in college education, among them students studying medicine, engineering, agriculture, law and other professional courses.*

Young artists in Tamilnadu, India

3. "Achieving so much with so little"

Alas, it is not always possible to offer refugees the opportunities of sponsorship and scholarships to further their education. Such chances, available from UNHCR or other agencies, are very few compared to demand. Hence JRS workers around the world consistently struggle to find innovative ways of providing students with a space for learning even in the most deprived circumstances. In doing so, they find that, in the words of Francis Leong, former country director, JRS Zambia, *so much can be achieved with so little*.

Meheba refugee settlement, Zambia

Mr Leong discovered this when a JRS team set up the *University of the Forest* in Meheba refugee camp settlement, for Congolese university students who fled persecution in the nineties. Accustomed to living in an urban environment, the refugee students found themselves in totally alien surroundings when they were placed in a camp in a rural area and required to farm for their living. Mr Leong recalls how *with blackboards, chalk and the shelter of trees, a 10-lesson course in humanistic philosophy, in both French and English, was established. It eased the trauma, gave participants analytical skills by which they could assess their situation and develop appropriate responses to the demands and constraints imposed on them by the settlement authorities*. For him, the 'University' was another example of the stabilizing and healing powers of the learning environment established under difficult conditions: *The University and the one and only course it offered gave a sense of identity and purpose*.

Karagwe, Tanzania

Independent learning centres set up in 1995 in camps in Tanzania's Karagwe region offered secondary-level refugees a chance to continue their education. The project also gave, in the words of former director for JRS Tanzania, Katie Erisman MM, *a feeling of wholeness and hope after trauma*. The experience in Karagwe is a tribute to the success of inventive approaches when planned conventional methods fail.

JRS personnel had been recruited for en education project in the region of Karagwe. However, the planned secondary school programme was not allowed to open. Several times project proposals were submitted only to be rejected by UNHCR saying that secondary schooling was not a right and would show permanency. Finally in September 1995 a plan for three independent learning centres with libraries was approved. The basic curriculum consisted of English, Kiswahili, French, library skills, sports and music. The libraries were staffed by refugee students. Teachers were both Tanzanian and Burundian. By the end of 1995 the first learning centre was functioning well.

Khartoum, Sudan

In Sudan's capital, Khartoum, JRS joined other NGOs and the diocese in implementing a range of educational initiatives for the city's huge population of internally displaced people, including a post-secondary, two-year programme of courses such as social ethics, geopolitics, and biblical theology. Writing about the initiative, Virginia Hasson RSM said it aimed *to give students a better understanding of their present situation and to help them to develop a more critical approach to their life situations. The goal was to provide students with a solid academic foundation for further study and to enable them to take on responsible positions when they return home*. Other initiatives were a "foundation course", a series of modules in basic education and Religious Studies units. The latter were conducted in several church-related localities throughout the city and they targeted young adults who did not have much opportunity to learn about their Christian faith. These programmes utilised the distance-learning format, an approach increasingly adopted by JRS projects in Africa and Asia as a structured and successful means of furthering refugees' education.

4. Bringing learning to learners: distance education

Distance education programmes enable refugees and displaced youth to further their studies in places where they are not near to or cannot access formal or non-formal learning opportunities. In addition, distance education helps children and youth to study during conflict situations or when they are unable to attend school due to insecurity.

However, experience has shown that this model is appropriate and feasible only in certain situations, with specifically trained distance educators, materials designed for individual and group study, and self-motivated students. Aware that nothing can replace class interaction among learners as well as with their elders, JRS personnel resort to distance education only when traditional forms of schooling are not an option.

Kakuma camp, Kenya

One interesting initiative in this sphere is a Tertiary Distance Learning centre in Kakuma camp, which is run in collaboration with UNISA, the distance learning programme of the University of South Africa in Pretoria. The UNISA centre was set up in 1998 to give refugees in this isolated camp –many of whom had their tertiary education career curtailed by war – the chance to attain university diplomas, albeit against great odds. JRS personnel running the centre emphasise its broad objective, saying it was established

not only to fulfil higher education needs but also to give refugees hope and to prepare them to be useful citizens in the future, either in their country of origin or of resettlement. An added dimension is that special consideration is given to candidates who have shown initiative and who have rendered service to the community.

Hugh Delaney, former information officer for JRS International, visited Kakuma camp and met refugees undergoing studies with the UNISA centre. He describes the programme and the context it unfolds in, as well as the determination of students despite the considerable challenges they face:

The residents of Kakuma camp, situated in the heart of desert area of Kenya, lead a semi-nomadic life, moving to kraals with their cattle in the dry season, retuning to homesteads for a spell of cultivation during the brief and uncertain period of rains. There is little on the horizon but thorn trees and mountains. The borders of Sudan and Ethiopia are close by. The refugees in this camp are in exile from various countries: Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Burundi, Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. Around 80% come from Sudan. Many are young men who came to the camp as minors. They fled war in the early nineties and escaped through Ethiopia and finally came to Kenya. Most were 10 years old, or in their early teens. Their greatest need was shelter, education and security.

JRS started a Tertiary Distance Learning programme to provide an opportunity for students whose university education was interrupted by war to continue and complete their studies. Setting up the programme, making the necessary arrangements with Pretoria, and arranging routes for the delivery of materials was an enormous challenge. Now students do well, in spite of the harsh conditions of Kakuma, both from the point of view of the little that is provided to them as refugees and from the arid, desert location of the camp.

Despite the understandable fear that they will never be able to leave the camp, the young refugees are anxious to secure an education and to equip themselves with the necessary skills for life should they ever be able to return home or leave the camp to go elsewhere. Funding covers registration fees, material expenses, transporting of assignments and books as well as tuition costs. The current group of undergraduates is studying a variety of subjects such as Commerce, Social Sciences, the Humanities, Administration and Public Relations.

The obstacles and challenges to overcome are numerous. One student told how he was studying geography but that he was unable to leave the confines of the camp to conduct a field trip and that he did not have access to the internet, enough books, or relevant people with whom to conduct interviews. Another student said it was like

being in a prison in the camp, studying away for a degree but with hands tied because of the disadvantages he was faced with. Many of the students have no light in the evening, and because they all teach in the camp schools during the day, their actual study time is limited. All this work and learning, all the hurdles to overcome, and at the end of it perhaps a degree, but then what? Some students have been in the camp for years and wonder what difference such a qualification will make to their lives if they are to be continued in the stifling prison-like isolation of the camp. Such thoughts are ever present but not defeating. How could a student who puts so much effort into his work against all the odds in Kakuma not question where it is taking him? Where the qualifications take the students may depend a good deal on events and circumstances beyond their control. What is more certain is that they will provide the graduates with a greater belief in themselves and their abilities, a sense of achievement, and given the opportunity, empowering skills that will allow them to plan for a better future.

The answer to some of the realistic questions posed by Mr Delaney may be found in the experience of E. B. Getachew, a refugee in Kakuma camp, who graduated from the UNISA programme in 2004, an achievement which *changed and brightened my life*. A second-year college student when he fled from Ethiopia, Mr Getachew dreamed of being able to continue his education as a refugee, *I had no peace because I did not complete my studies*. In Kakuma camp since 1993, Mr Getachew's hopes were waning fast. *I attempted many avenues but there was no chance until in 2000, I was selected to join the UNISA scholarship programme, and the joy that I felt was so immense. UNISA's education has enabled me to create meaning in my life and in my environment. Economics and business management were my major subjects which are interestingly relevant to my life situation*. Today Mr Getachew is a business education teacher, contributing to workshops for youth run by NGOs in the camp. He says: *It is a pleasure for me to share my knowledge and experience to young people and adults so that they may participate in economic activities towards self reliance and a better future.*

The Mozambican Open Learning Unit (MOLU)

The Mozambican Open Learning Unit (MOLU) is a noteworthy JRS project. It developed in Malawi in the early nineties precisely to meet the expressed desire of Mozambican refugees for post-primary education. The programme developed as a distance-learning initiative and within a few years, more than 1,000 refugees were enrolled in the program. The schools established were eventually transferred to Mozambique, where they continue to flourish thanks to the cooperation of the Ministry for Education and the Catholic Church.

Lolín Menéndez RSCJ was involved in the programme's initial stages. She recalls its launch and rapid expansion:

Back in 1990, the geography of Malawi posed a unique challenge to JRS personnel who were seeking how to address some of the unmet needs of Mozambican refugees in the country. Almost two million refugees were settled in camps strung along the border, in a country that runs in a thin strip of land from north to south, and where the 20km between east and west borders are just an 'afternoon's walk'.

JRS personnel heard refugees state over and over the need and the hope for schools that went beyond the basic level. The Mozambican Ministry of Education, together with UNHCR and other partners were providing primary education in all camps, scattered though they were. All refugee children had access to schools. But the need of youth remained unmet. There was no secondary program to channel energies and opportunities away from war. It was evident young people desired and needed further learning, a possibility that kept alive the hope of a productive future on return. An opportunity to continue the normal progression of school levels could also facilitate the reintegration of secondary students into the Mozambican system of education and among their age-mates on repatriation.

JRS chose to address this situation by setting up a distance learning programme. MOLU followed the pattern of other pioneer successful distance programmes, notably SOLU in Sudan and SOMOLU in Somalia. The vision of JRS was to set up learning centres, first in a few camps where there was the greater concentration of primary leavers, and gradually to extend the program where necessary. The centres were conceived as places where students and tutors could meet on a regular basis, a 'base' where pupils could study on their own away from the pressures and harsh conditions of the camp, perhaps consult a small library, and have access to various learning materials.

During its first year the MOLU programme took the shape of a traditional Grade 9 class in one camp while materials were being prepared. This was the time for groundbreaking, as the challenges posed by this decision were multiple. Distance learning is not ordinary learning. Teachers and pupils both need to be formed to new attitudes and skills for learning and for teaching. Many conversations took place around requests for a traditional school, with desks and blackboards, and for regular lectures by teachers.

The crucial issue was the preparation of suitable materials for distance learning. It was not easy to secure all the textbooks from Mozambique – only nine secondary

schools were functioning in the country at that time. It was not easy either to recruit Portuguese-speaking personnel with the skill of writing for distance learning. Gradually materials were prepared; slowly, pupils and teachers felt more at home in this new way of learning and teaching. A window to the future was open, and many chose to keep it so though commendable personal effort.

Commendable efforts were indeed made, not least by the refugees themselves.
Muchinshi Chilinda SJ, who coordinated the English course in the early days of MOLU recalls how *our students ranged in age from 15 to 45. There were people older than myself doing Grade 8. Parents and children might study together for the same class.* What he remembers most clearly is how the presence of JRS filled refugees with hope: *I would take materials and introduce them and the methods to the local teachers; boosting morale among them was a big part of the work. What touched me most was the way in which the refugees appreciated the presence of JRS workers. They were happy not only with what we were giving but simply because we were there. We were signs of hope and life. People live in great hope of going back home. JRS and MOLU were signs of a process of helping them to return.*

When the refugees returned home, MOLU went back with them. Michael Schultheis SJ who envisioned the creation of the programme, witnessed its journey "home": *JRS continued to expand the MOLU programme and to shift schools into Mozambique at the same time. In one instance, refugee families waited to return to their homes until after JRS had transferred the MOLU school and students across the border to Mozambique - only then did they feel confident that it was safe enough to follow! By the end of 1994, when JRS transferred the programme, the 10 MOLU schools had an enrolment of nearly 1,000 students, about one quarter the size of the public secondary school system in Mozambique.*

The transfer was completed by 1995 and the programme took on a life of its own once it moved to Mozambique, as was intended from the beginning. In Lichinga Diocese, MOLU schools were handed over to the diocese and the provincial education office. In Tete province and Angonia district they were managed by the Jesuits for two years and then either incorporated within the parish school system or passed to the district education office. To this day, the former MOLU programme functions as a successful secondary education programme in the Diocese of Lichinga.

The manner in which the MOLU project developed as a strategy to respond

concretely to an unmet educational need, as well as its evolution into a school system in the refugees' home country, make it a landmark among JRS educational initiatives.

A tribute to refugees' perseverance

The projects described in this chapter testify to the tough challenges inherent in providing post-primary education. Resourcefulness goes a long way in providing alternatives, however due to a lack of resources and other constraints, the need of refugees for further education remains largely unmet. Dilemmas must be faced and choices made. However, it is not a question of compromise, but of looking for the appropriate response in a particular circumstance.

If implementers of secondary education projects need determination to press head, all the more so refugees who seek to benefit from such initiatives. The projects described in this chapter also testify to the perseverance of refugees in their struggle to further their studies, and to their determination to defy the heavy odds against them. One striking illustration of the burdens carried by refugees comes from a reflection shared by another pioneer member of the MOLU team. José Ignacio García SJ taught physics, chemistry and technical drawing in Mankhokwe, a camp of about 90,000 refugees.

But how is one to learn in a foreign land, especially after experiencing trauma? I think of a girl kidnapped by guerrillas and 'assigned' to one of the soldiers. After almost three years she ran away alone one night and crossed the border. I met her when she was working as a teacher and studying at MOLU, dreaming that education might open a new future. I was her teacher for months before learning of her past.

Such perseverance deserves to be rewarded with nothing less than the best we have to offer in terms of practical support and moral encouragement. The striving of JRS to meet refugees' educational needs at whatever cost, and to sustain their hope in doing so, arises from this conviction. The mission to fulfil refugees' aspirations goes far beyond initiatives based on academic achievement alone: all are invited to learn according to their potential and possibilities, and this is the subject of the next chapter.

Negage, Angola

Tailoring workshop in Nangweshi, Zambia ©*Lolin Menendez RSCJ/JRS*

Chapter Three

Learning for life in and beyond the classroom

Literacy, vocational and income generating programmes

Before I joined the adult literacy programme, people had to translate for me in meetings of the pastoral council. Now after being on the programme for two years, I myself am able to translate at the same meetings. I also work as an associate of the logistics officer. I am proud of what I have achieved.
Joseph Lemi, a refugee in Rhino camp, north Uganda, member of the pastoral council

Education is for life. What students learn from their textbooks within the classroom would be of little use if they were unable to translate it into concrete advantage in their lives in the present and in the future. To be relevant, any educational process must be comprehensive and practical, going beyond the walls of the classroom and pages of copybooks to transform the daily reality of learners.
Such a perspective implies universality, opening avenues for learning to all. Refugees are a vibrant witness to that age-old cliché, "never too old to learn". Even those who never received formal schooling are always eager for opportunities for education not only for their children but for themselves also. Small wonder, for they find themselves in circumstances which compel them to make the most of their abilities to survive. And time often weighs heavily on refugees' hands especially in the early days, as their surroundings condemn them to boredom and dependency, unable to practice lifelong, familiar trades and professions and to be self-sufficient.
Our task is to help refugees do more than survive, it is to help them live as free men and women, wrote Bill Yeomans SJ, one of the pioneer workers of JRS in Asia Pacific in the eighties. For refugees, the acquisition of new skills and knowledge are concrete steps towards freedom, empowering them in more ways than one as they are enabled to regain a measure of control of their lives. As one refugee woman from Angola told a JRS worker: *I cannot do anything about my past, but I can do something about my future*. The key word here is self-reliance: JRS seeks to provide refugees with suitable skills with this far-reaching goal always in sight, with all the future prospects it heralds, whether in one's homeland or elsewhere.
Education takes on a wide meaning and far-reaching scope as a tool to enable

refugees to come to grips with the challenges they face, even to capitalize on the difficulties. In such a scenario, there are endless opportunities for learning. This chapter delves into a range of JRS projects which have enjoyed repeated success, in one format or another, in different settings. They include adult literacy, vocational training, computer classes, income-generating activities, and initiatives targeting groups with special needs.

Fundamental principles guide JRS projects in this area, especially a commitment to developing programmes in consultation with refugees. Experience has proved how crucial it is to listen to needs and desires expressed by adults, students of post-primary age. Where are the gaps? Who has little or no access to learning? What can be done to address these issues?

Equipping refugees to be self-sufficient offers realistically grounded hope to more than individuals. Formation is a source of communal hope, enabling refugees as a body to fend for themselves and to rebuild their broken communities. As they will tell you quite happily, finding a niche in a project where they learn something new, older refugees are instilled with renewed confidence in themselves as they realise they have something to offer their community.

1. Literacy programmes that empower

Nimule, southern Sudan and Rhino camp, northern Uganda

Enhanced self-esteem becomes doubly precious when the time for return approaches. A JRS education project in the south of Sudan, in the heart of territory ravaged by civil war, provides ample proof of this as it prepares displaced people for the long road of reconstruction following the signing of peace in 2004.

The focus of this particular programme is adult literacy. Such programmes are crucial for southern Sudanese – as they are for all refugees facing imminent return with all the tasks this implies – because most of them were unable to attend school throughout the years of war. Asked why he never went to school when he was young, one learner in the Nimule programme, Elisa Pitia replied: *When the Europeans came to Sudan, the only people who could be sent to school where the sons of the chiefs. When the Arabs came to Sudan, they started schools but only in the Arabic language. So we had no chance for education. Now I will struggle to send my children to school because I have realised the need for education since joining the adult literacy programme.*

These observations are shared by countless other refugees who never had the chance to go to school and who earnestly desire tools to improve their future. They value the opportunities given to their children to attend school, but they also want a chance to acquire functional skills in literacy, or to refresh what was learned long ago and almost forgotten. One major obstacle is a lack of suitable material for adults, of programmes geared for rural communities and written in local languages. Only a few people are trained in the particular competencies demanded by adult education. JRS has taken steps to respond to this need on the part of so many people in the communities where we work.

The commitment of JRS to address the unique educational needs of adults has been amply rewarded by a positive transformation in learners, as revealed by the success of the Nimule programme described by Celestino Dumo of JRS Nimule:
JRS first came to Nimule in 1998 with the initial aim to support basic education for children of the internally displaced community. The programme expanded over the years and adult literacy initiatives started. The impact of the adult education programme has reached a stage where some graduates put a halt to translation into the mother tongue during public functions, insisting, 'we can understand English'. The current trend is that adult education is as important as primary and secondary education. This need has become stronger with the signing of the peace agreement in southern Sudan, educated members of the community have already returned home in response to a call for responsibility and to take up assignments. This is an additional factor which motivates people to learn.

JRS personnel observe how learners make the most of lessons by tackling prevalent social problems in class discussions. *An interesting feature is that all the learners focus the content of classes on current problems like alcoholism, domestic violence, sexual gender-based violence, cultural violence against women, child abuse, and suicide*, says Lokuri Atanasio, functional adult literacy coordinator in Rhino camp in northern Uganda. *It is useful to engage the community in discussions on these topics to discover root causes and to find possible solutions to problems.*

Programme coordinators give lessons added value by focusing on topics which foster self-sufficiency: leadership skills, home management, health, agriculture and gender issues. In Rhino camp, literacy instructors attend peace-building seminars, enabling them to give constructive input in class debates about peace issues. Continues Mr Lokuri: *As learners discuss issues that*

affect them, like peace, they realize the need for respecting human dignity and promoting justice. Customary laws as practiced by some Sudanese tribes are a main drawback to human rights, particularly in the case of women, children and minorities. Thus adult literacy programmes go far beyond teaching basic writing and reading skills. They have the potential to address community concerns and to introduce new concepts to replace cultural, deeply rooted discriminatory practices (where they exist).

This gradual attitudinal change is encouraged by measures to enhance the participation of women. Mr Atanasio says this is by no means an easy process: *The same setbacks affecting the education of girls in formal schools like having to do many domestic chores, or negative cultural attitudes, hinder the attendance of women in literacy classes. During a follow-up workshop, women reported they often found difficulty in using their skills when they returned home*. Nonetheless, progress can be discerned, especially in a complementary programme for women related to income-generating activities. *The programmes minimize gender imbalance in Sudanese communities and pave the way for equity in contribution to the development process*. In Nimule too, adult literacy programmes have components built in to support women running their own modest business, with supervisors to guide them. *The impact on the community is positive*, says Mr Dumo, *centres are expanding and groups report profits from their work*.

Literacy class in Rwanda

2. Skills formation for income-generating activities

The empowerment of refugee women through learning is a distinctive feature of JRS across the world. One way of achieving this is through vocational projects which equip refugees with skills to earn a living.

Lainé camp, Guinea

Such projects are typically modest in scale and they focus simple activities, in the hope that acquiring a skill will help refugees when they return home. One such project is under way in Lainé camp in Guinea for Liberian refugees. Since the programme was set up in 2003, more than 3,200 people have received formation in one trade or another, the majority of them women. As implementing partner for UNHCR in informal education, JRS supports vocational schools which hold six-month courses for 600 students each time. The courses offer a range of skills for all, namely soap-making, dying garments, bakery and tailoring as well as complementary sessions in basic health promotion. *Adults have gained autonomy and they now have different options for earning money. Even if they cannot go to work in the fields, they know how to make soap and to sew, and this can be done at home*, says Covadonga Oreja, CCV, former project director for JRS in Lainé camp. This is crucially important for Liberian refugees who are headed for home just as people displaced by the war in southern Sudan are.

The success of the Lainé skills-training project is due in part to lessons learned by JRS personnel as they set up courses together with refugees. One message swiftly grasped was that JRS should listen to refugees, who made known what it was they wanted to learn. *It was the refugees, not JRS, who decided what the project should be: they asked for activities which could give them self reliance in the camp and on return to Liberia*, said Mateo Aguirre, regional director of JRS in West Africa. *Refugees told us they wanted to learn how to make soap, since there is plenty of palm oil in the area. They asked to learn how to dye clothes, a typical activity in the region*. Another valuable lesson was learning to focus on perceived strengths, not only on the wounds and the past of refugees. Says Sr Oreja: *There is a Liberian woman who is illiterate in English, but who knows how to make soap. Today, she is a leader and she teaches other women. Like her, they cannot read or write, but they are very willing to learn*.

Willing to learn and to teach others, becoming aware of their inherent capabilities, feeling proud of themselves... time and again, JRS personnel worldwide bear witness to the upbeat approach of refugees. *The experience I have lived here is new for me. I led a group of refugee women and we implemented a project*, said one woman in Lainé camp. *I cried for joy when the time came to say*

farewell because I felt so grateful for what I achieved... This made me feel good. Thus, as they prepare to go home, refugees who had the opportunity to receive formation may dare to say their exile was in some way enriching. *For these people, the refugee experience has led to new possibilities of learning. They will take back to their country a clear awareness of their capabilities. Women's previous dependent role could well change after being refugees,* said Sr Oreja.

Sr Oreja's view was borne out by events in Lainé in 2005, when women were emboldened to advocate for their rights and to lay claim to participation in the running of the camp. She tells of one "victory": holding an election to replace the camp committee amid long-standing credible allegations of unfairness and corruption in aid distribution. *After two and a half years, UNHCR and the Guinean government finally decided to organise the election. The good news is that women were the ones who contested, and they won. They organised themselves, encouraged female candidates in the various zones of the camp and voted. You should have seen the women dancing, singing and celebrating in the camp. People were so happy, especially the women: 'It was not easy, sister, but we did it'.*

In many JRS projects, the benefits of skills formation are further exploited by linking them to income generating activities. The two go hand in hand as refugees who receive training set up cooperatives or sell their wares through retail outlets, some managed by JRS. There are dozens of examples of diverse income generating projects run by JRS throughout the world, ranging from a laundry service in Italy to a bakery in Burundi. Stephen Power SJ, former regional director for JRS Eastern Africa, says: *Some micro-enterprises which have proved the most successful for those with very little capital can be classified under 'petty trade': selling tea, setting up little food stalls, buying and reselling various goods. Many refugees have proved very resourceful in these ways of eking out a living. For example, such micro-projects are implemented among displaced people in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where many have found short courses on how to manage their money, how to manage their time and work to be extremely valuable.*

Nairobi, Kenya

One veteran project, well-known throughout JRS, is the Mikono refugee craft shop in Nairobi, Kenya. Started in 1991, Mikono (*hands* in Kiswahili) shop is part of a project empowering vulnerable refugees, especially women with children, to become self-reliant through the provision of small loans as well as training to set up a handicraft business and financial management. The project includes seminars and workshops about basic accounting, budget plan-

ning and marketing techniques so that the sum of money given in the form of a loan can yield fruit quickly and consistently. The shop markets products made by the refugees nationally and internationally.

Regional director for JRS Eastern Africa, John Guiney SJ says the income earned by the refugees makes a substantial difference to their quality of life. *Mikono tries to empower refugees in urban settings, which at times are very hard and challenging, and we now also offer handicraft from refugee camps such as Daadab and Kakuma in Kenya and others in western Tanzania. Through this project, we link their skills to the market place, helping many individuals become productive and above all building their dignity. The programme is directed to the most vulnerable refugees, because we want to help keep families together.*

Useful though it is, Br Power says the Mikono shop faces continual challenges to find a niche in what is often a restricted and highly competitive market. *Projects for self-sufficiency like the Mikono shop have to navigate the tortuous waters of local markets. Many displaced people find themselves in places where the demand for their products at the market may be extremely limited. The clever producer has to find where the demand lies and for what products. Then it is a case of economising with materials to make a simple yet beautiful product which will compete well with anything else. Rwandese, Burundian, Somali and Sudanese refugees in Nairobi have to compete with local Kenyan craftsman who have all the advantages of their own homes and local contacts.*

Retailing goods through a shop, one must judge how much of a 'mark-up' to make on goods. If the refugees selling to the shop are given a very good price, the necessary mark-up to support the shop's overheads will have to be very small and it will fail quickly. If refugees are offered too low a price, they have nothing much for their labours and the project also fails!

If the markets within the country are not viable, attempts can be made to find buyers abroad. However, this needs a step up in marketing expertise and investment and regular supplies of good quality products, well-packaged and easy to send.

Kiyange settlement, Burundi

Training and income generating activities can play a particularly significant role in giving displaced youth a purpose in life and decent future prospects. An income-generating project in Kiyange in Burundi is a case in point. Kiyange is one of several settlements scattered across the country to cater for

around 400,000 internally displaced people, the outcome of decades of civil war. Located north of Bujumbura, the settlement is part of the district of Buterere, the poorest area of the capital. Roughly two-thirds of the roughly 5,000 residents of Kiyange are under the age of 24. Former director of JRS in Burundi, Nicholas Dorronsoro, recalls grim living conditions in Kiyange:

Thousands of people from different districts of Bujumbura were forced to leave the city to live in suburbs like Kiyange, which lacked even basic sanitary conditions. Many of the Kiyange residents are teenagers, some in late secondary school and others lacking formal schooling. Unemployment is the main problem for them, making the army a real option. This lack of choices determines the destiny of thousands of Burundian boys. Another significant demographic factor is the high number of people affected by AIDS: over 20 percent of the population of Kiyange is infected by HIV.

The bishop of Bujumbura asked JRS to help meet the displaced people's most urgent needs. After the initial emergency phase, JRS defined as a priority the development of income generating activities to break the cycle of poverty. Now, over 200 young men and women are assisted by professional training in JRS workshops – bakery, carpentry, basketwork, tanning, leather work and sewing are the most popular and successful trades – and when they 'graduate', their products are sold in JRS stalls across the city. Mr Dorronsoro says the only qualification needed to join the project is a willingness to do one's best. *Primary schooling is not necessary to become an apprentice, the only requirements are a desire to work and personal responsibility. To free the students from having to earn an income while they attend the course, they receive a modest monthly stipend. Their work is integrated within the framework of a co-operative, promoted by JRS with self-reliance as the main goal.*

3. Getting connected

Computer and language courses in Southeast Europe

Training programmes are to be found everywhere in JRS. The range of skills taught varies widely: while programmes in rural areas tend to emphasise agriculture and learning a trade, those in cities may have a different focus. JRS Southeast Europe has invested in setting up computer and language schools, which proved to be a timely choice because basic training has given displaced people indispensable skills for the region's job market.

Substantial progress has been achieved in former Yugoslavia since the end of successive wars which swept across the region in the nineties. Economic, security and democracy achievements have been considerable, partly thanks to massive international aid. However, several countries remain crippled by the inevitable costs of economic transition, widespread unemployment and large numbers of displaced people. It was in this context that JRS decided to provide refugees with computer skills to give them an edge in job-searching: as privatization slowly gets off the ground, new companies are happy to recruit those who can handle a computer with ease.

The first computer centre was opened in 2000 in Skopje, Macedonia, for internally displaced people, and now there are several centres across Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia. Some have been set up in cities like Belgrade and Sarajevo, others in so-called "collective centres" (camps) in Serbia and others in underdeveloped villages. Thousands of people have been awarded attendance certificates for basic and advanced courses.

According to Milenko, a teacher at the JRS computer centre in Belgrade, the JRS initiative achieves its aim. *Many refugees who attended our courses managed to get a proper job because of their newly acquired skills. Most participants know nothing about computers when they start. For some, it is the first time they have sat in front of one and within a month, they know how to use it. They say they never thought they could learn so much in such a short time.* Students, meanwhile, appreciate the chance to learn, knowing only too well how hard it is to find employment. Stella, a 35-year-old Croatian Serb refugee who has lived in Belgrade since 1995, attended the course. She said: *I am a teacher. It is very difficult to find work as there are only temporary jobs to be had in Belgrade, for one or two months at most. I come here to learn computer because it is the future for all jobs.*

Encouraged by the success of computer training, JRS Southeast Europe launched foreign language courses. People have welcomed these lessons with the same enthusiasm as they did the computer courses. Hundreds of displaced people who would never have had the chance to enlist in expensive private language schools have joined up.

A Croatian student.

©JRS Croatia

4. Targeting specific groups for formation

Tamilnadu, southern India

In line with JRS criteria of giving priority to more vulnerable and needy refugees, education programmes often include components targeting specific groups. The *Grihini* (which means *complete woman* in Tamil) course for Sri Lankan teenagers is part of a wider education strategy for youth in camps in Tamilnadu. The six-month residential course is offered to girls who drop out of school, a group identified by JRS personnel as needing extra attention. *The dropout rate among girls increases alarmingly when the location of camps is shifted from place to place, disrupting education,* says Paul Newman, information officer for JRS South Asia. *Girls who drop out of school are usually very vulnerable, they lack motivation and become depressed. To help them refocus, the project aims at engaging them in learning skills to help them manage their lives.* Projected as a "life-skills" course, Grihini provides skills grounded in a comprehensive approach. Besides training in tailoring, embroidery and handicrafts, the course offers classes in home management, personality development, counselling, leadership skills, public speaking, drama, and the environment. Innovative topics include laws related to women, yoga, and public speaking.

The stunning results of the programme are evident in the girls' drastically improved chances for employment and in their enhanced self-esteem. Says Mr Newman: *On completing the course, the girls typically become more confident and ready to face the challenges of the world. They are often seen as role models by other girls and they help to improve the general atmosphere of the camps. Other NGOs employ them as field assistants in their projects and some have even joined other centres as tutors, teaching tailoring and other skills. Certificates awarded for attending the nursing courses have enabled some young women to secure jobs in private clinics and nursing homes, while girls who have a certificate from the computer course have found jobs in computer and internet centres.*

Kakuma, Kenya

Another JRS life-skills programme targeting vulnerable young women caters for teenage single mothers in Kakuma camp in Kenya. The programme is part of an overall social services network run by JRS in the camp. It reaches 40 mothers in each group, the majority of them Sudanese.

Like the *Grihini* course, the project focuses on training within an overall perspective of enhancing the girls' self-esteem and coping skills.

The girls on the project suffer from twofold discrimination when it comes to accessing education: they are girls and single mothers at that. Calinée Nayiburundi Bonaventure, JRS supervisor of the project, says: *Girls in the camp often face sexual harassment and are frequently deprived of their right to education and training. After becoming single mothers, a stigma in most communities, most young women lose hope and become stressed, depressed and traumatized. The programme is a bridge to help them recover and become integrated once again in their communities.* The programme sets out to achieve this goal in several ways. The young mothers come together and share their experiences, *a healing process starts and the journey towards psychological well-being begins.* Beyond the self-help group, JRS provides counselling and alternative forms of therapy, such as massage and reflexology.

The programme also helps the young mothers to continue their education and skills training with the help of other NGOs. Group discussions and English classes take place. The girls learn new skills – crochet, knitting, embroidery and plastic recycling – through occupational therapy and they sell items they produce. Some students later work with JRS.

5. No longer a burden: catering for landmine survivors and other refugees with disabilities

Over the years, several JRS programmes have aimed to enable refugees with disabilities, especially those maimed in war by landmines or bombs. The extensive involvement of JRS International in lobbying for the prohibition of landmines has always been accompanied by services for mine survivors, including programmes to encourage independence through vocational skills. In places as diverse as Cambodia, Angola, Sri Lanka and Bosnia, all littered by mines even years after the guns of war have fallen silent, JRS accompanies and enables mine survivors.

Cambodia

In Cambodia, the deep involvement of JRS with landmine survivors goes back several years and is today institutionalised in *Banteay Prieb* (Centre of the Dove), a vocational training centre. Situated a few km from Phnom Penh, the centre was set up in the early nineties to offer one-year courses to landmine survivors and other people with disabilities. The centre – which was eventually passed onto the Jesuit Service (JS) Cambodia - is still going strong: around 100 students are awarded a diploma at the end of each course. Sok Leng successfully underwent the training course at *Banteay Prieb* and today she works

as an adviser to other girl students. Her story is a journey from despair to hope through education.

One day, 1981, I went to collect water for my family. Boom! I suddenly felt as if lightening had struck right inside me. I had stepped on a landmine and both my legs were gone. I was 12 years old. My parents helped me very much, but I had lost hope in life. When I went back to my village in Kandal Stung, I had no legs and no wheelchair. I was unable to go to school and stayed at home for 13 years. I was too ashamed of my body even to go to the Khmer New Year party or any other celebration. When my brothers and sisters came home from school I tried to learn their lessons. It was a very sad time for me.

A turning point in my life came when the Cambodia Trust visited our village. They had artificial legs made for me, which gave me hope. But it was so painful to learn to walk, my legs bled and I cried with pain. Within a year, I could walk well... but what next? I was approached by a teacher, Yeth, from the Centre of the Dove, a Jesuit Service training centre. He asked me if I wanted to learn sculpture, sewing, carpentry, weaving or electronics. I chose electronics. At first, it was very hard, because I had only been to school for one year, but after nights of hard work, I succeeded: I was good. I was also taught home gardening, and made many friends, disabled like myself. On graduation night I danced, and I was so happy.

My hopes ran high, but at the same time, I wondered... what will I do when I leave, how will I earn a living? The answer to these questions came when I was asked to become the leader of the new girl students at the training centre. I accepted. During school hours, I mend television sets and learn more, and after school, I care for the students. So today, I have a job and a salary, and I love helping others.

JS Cambodia outreach teams follow *Banteay Prieb* graduates in several provinces throughout the country, helping them get back on their feet by setting up small businesses, purchasing land, or with assistance in education. Thirteen-year-old Sot is one beneficiary: he lost both arms in a mine accident in March 2004. Today he lives in the Jesuit-run Arrupe Centre, with 30 other children who like him, have special needs, and he goes to school in Battambang, where he is slowly learning how to write with his new prosthesis.

Cambodia. Sot learns how to write with his new prosthesis ©*Amaya Valcarcel/JRS*

Nangweshi camp, Zambia

The JRS team in Nangweshi camp for Angolan refugees in Zambia targets people with physical disabilities in a series of specialised training projects, reaching out to amputees as well as refugees who are deaf, blind or who have other special needs. In doing so, JRS taps the experience of the disabled refugees themselves; there are many in Nangweshi, largely a legacy of Angola's recently ended civil war. Claudia Garzón, who works for JRS in Nangweshi, describes their plight:

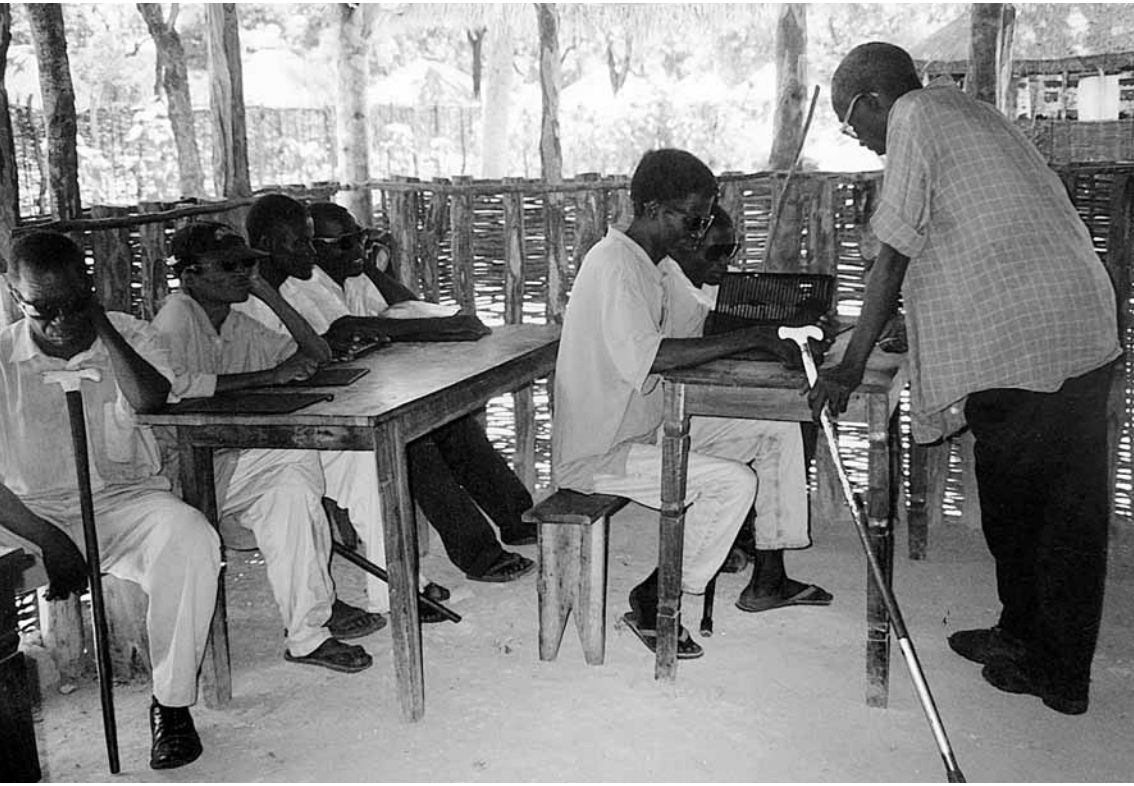
Angola is now at peace after 30 years of fighting... the war has left behind a large number of handicapped people. In 2005, there were 622 people with handicaps in the camp, most of whom were landmine survivors, others with various degrees of paralysis, blindness, and some children with hearing impairments. Most of the handicapped in Nangweshi are former soldiers. After losing an arm or a leg or their sight because of landmines or bombs, these men lived on charity in Angola and then in the camp.

Several disabled refugees had received training in Angola as technicians in making prosthesis, others as teachers and social workers and today they are part of JRS efforts to form other refugees. *In spite of their own disabilities, they lead workshops, teach most of the classes, and provide social assistance to vulnerable refugees.* JRS provides disabled refugees with training in skills like tailoring, knitting, shoe-making and repairs, carpentry, and typewriting as well as classes in radio repair. At the end of the course each student receives a basic kit with materials to start a modest business, and many people who trained with JRS are now working in the camp as carpenters, tailors or tinsmiths.

Literacy groups for adults in Portuguese and in English are also offered. *Persons enrolled in these activities hope to improve their communication skills and thus become an integral part of the community. For instance, one amputee studied Portuguese with JRS. He made great strides and today he teaches in one of the camp schools, says Ms Garzón. Other opportunities available are Braille lessons for the visually impaired, and lessons at primary level for profoundly deaf children are also provided.*

Refugees with special needs in Nangweshi are doubly appreciative of training because the opportunity could radically reverse their plight. *If you are handicapped and you have nothing to do or you don't know what to do, you become a 'double amputee' and your life is absolutely dark and depressed,* said one refugee. One of the most treasured outcomes of formation for refugees with disabili-

ties is that they feel useful and accepted by others. *Now that we are equipped to work, our families will not look at us like a heavy stone to carry, said one. And another: 'Normal people' separate us people who are blind or amputees. I don't know if it is fear or sadness. However, when we have training, when we can work and be useful, the same 'normal people' respect us.*



Braille class in Nangweshi, Zambia ©*Lolin Menendez RSCJ/JRS*

6. Coming full circle: implementing projects with refugees

The tributes by JRS workers and refugees in this chapter to the benefits of skills-training leave little room for doubt: it is a precious resource, not least because it provides means for self-sufficiency and therefore better prospects. However, the community reaps the benefits in the present too. As individual refugees are enriched, they often place their newly acquired capacities at the service of JRS, becoming an integral part of projects, as outlined in the context of Nangweshi camp. Offering training to refugees makes expansion of services immediately possible as they are now able to make a skilled and valuable contribution. Countless JRS projects worldwide bear testimony to this reality: a classic example is education projects staffed by thousands of trained refugee teachers.

Kakuma camp, Kenya

The social services project under way in Kakuma camp in Kenya offers a range of innovative services thanks to the input of trained refugees. The following reflection by Hugh Delaney, former information officer for JRS International, emphasises refugee participation:

In Kakuma camp, empowerment of the refugees is the focus of JRS personnel, the thread that binds all of the projects together. From income generating activities such as the breeding of pigs, chickens, ducks and turkeys, and the maintenance of vegetable and herbal gardens, to training in counselling skills and the provision of education, the projects aim to give some power and autonomy to the refugees, empowering them to take charge of and bring about change in their own lives, to the benefit of their communities.

Counselling plays a major role in nearly all of the projects. The psychological trauma and stress that many of the refugees have suffered either before, during or after flight has left deep scars. 'If you listen to people and their problems, you can actually heal the wound that is inside of them,' says Sammy, a refugee from southern Sudan who acts as a supervisor at the Green Counselling Centre, a project that oversees 42 counsellors who cater for the needs of around 900 clients on a weekly basis. Set up by JRS back in 1992, the centre's counsellors are themselves refugees and have been trained in the techniques of counselling and treating the problems of their fellow refugees.

At the beginning the refugees didn't know what counselling was and it took a long time to establish, to gain the trust of the communities and to build a reputation.

Now we work in all the communities, offering counselling in all the languages of the refugees. It is actually helping to reduce violence in the camp, making the place safer and removing some of the causes of conflict.

Violence and conflict is a theme that flows throughout the camp, barely under the surface, emerging on a regular basis as a constant reminder to the refugees of just how vulnerable and insecure their lives have become. For some of the younger refugees the strains and psychological tensions have become too much to bear, resulting in serious trauma, depression or even mental imbalance. What happens to a child who has witnessed so much suffering and violence, who has lost one or both parents, suffered abuse or who has had to live in a climate of fear? The answer can be found at the JRS day care centres in Kakuma, a service that caters for the needs of severely traumatised and troubled individuals, mainly children, by offering them special attention and rehabilitation counselling. Most of the young people who attend these centres are without parents, supported by friends, though unable to cope without special attention and care.

The day care centres are staffed by a group of very committed and enthusiastic refugees, who have been trained by JRS to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable and disturbed children in their care. Some of the young in the centres are visibly disturbed. The care that they are afforded in the centres offers them a lifeline, and is the key to their rehabilitation, offering them the best chance to overcome their traumas, to enter back into the schools of the camp and to continue as best as possible to rebuild their lives.

As the Kakuma project clearly reveals, the success of JRS endeavours in vocational training and income generation depends largely on the enthusiastic contribution of refugees themselves. We see the endeavours of JRS to empower refugees coming full circle as refugees make the most of their education, sharing with others what they have received. This partnership in developing and running projects is tackled in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Equal Partners. Promoting community participation and reciprocity

In a camp there are different types of people, some are leaders, very active and creative people. They do not need to hear what they have to do, but they need to feel accompanied in their initiatives.
Covadonga Oreja CV, former JRS director in Guinea

Education projects unfold within the wider vision of JRS, which draws its inspiration from being among refugees. This presence is central to our way of proceeding; its importance was underscored as early as 1985 by JRS pioneers who strove to identify what qualified their service: *We try to place special emphasis on being with rather than doing for (A Vision for JRS*, Chiang Mai statement, 1985).

JRS workers seek to implement this priority concretely by engaging the refugee community in running services offered: *Planning... starts with asking the refugees about their lives and needs...* was the response given by participants in a seminar in Kigali in 1995, when they were asked, *what do you regard as essential to JRS? (Everybody's Challenge, Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service 1980 - 2000)*. In so far as this is possible, projects are designed by listening to what refugees have to say, and implemented by drawing on the wealth of their experience and developing their potential.

Shelters for classes in Byumba refugee camp, Rwanda ©*Amaya Valcarcel/JRS*

The experience of JRS has proved this approach makes sense as refugees play a pivotal role in the life of a project right from the moment of conception. The support given to the newly arrived team in Lainé, described here by Sr Oreja, makes this clear. It was the refugees who showed JRS the ropes: who to serve and how to serve them.

From the beginning, our project has been managed by a team of refugees. The most valuable lesson I have learnt is to create a community and to build a project with them. They were our teachers before becoming teachers in the schools. They taught us what life in the camp is like, what they ate, where to find the people most in need, who were those who were able to teach others, how they had organized themselves as a community. They voluntarily paved the way for our activities, organizing meetings with youth and women who now benefit from the project. Little by little we got to know the people with the help of this team, and we felt that we were really walking in the same direction.

Sr Oreja's experience of walking with refugees and learning from them in shared endeavours as equal partners is what lies at the heart of the work of JRS. Her words echo the statement made in Chiang Mai: *We want our presence among refugees to be one of sharing with them, of walking together along the same path.*

This course of action has repeatedly yielded deeply satisfactory returns for all involved, especially for the refugees themselves. Their participation fulfils their desire to be involved in their children's education, as Mateo Aguirre SJ discovered in Bukavu, DRC: *What was amazing in the Rwandan exodus was that even if traumatised by the events, refugees asked for education programs for their children and they wanted to get involved in the design and implementation.*

Involvement in community projects invites refugees to take the lead in being catalysts for change rather than passive recipients, making a solid contribution to sowing seeds of hope. Continues Sr Oreja: *A school or any other community development project is an opportunity for people to be something more than survivors of a war or another statistic. There is an opportunity to dream and to try to do what is important for the community.*

1. The community sets the agenda

Profoundly rewarding and crucial as the refugees' participation is, it calls for time and patience and is not always easily achieved. Learning about the val-

ues and hopes of a community are not tasks accomplished overnight. Trust must be earned, confidence encouraged, the impact of prevailing circumstances on the refugees grasped. However, even if months of groundwork are called for, this is never wasted time if the project ultimately reflects the legitimate aspirations for education of the refugees concerned.

Panzi camp, Bukavu, DRC

This lesson was swiftly learned by a JRS team determined to foster independence and self-respect among people with special needs in Panzi camp near Bukavu on the Congo-Rwandan border. A member of the team, Joaquím Pons SJ , recalls that on arriving in the camp he faced refugees' initial suspicion, born of suffering: *We had to bear in mind the context which conditioned the life of so many people. People were traumatized, not only by war, but by the way international institutions had treated them, so they hardly trusted anyone. We had to gain their trust.* As the JRS team sought to win people's confidence, they were guided first and foremost by a resolve to listen to them, *we wanted to share their path and our aim was to build the programme in friendship with them. We did not have much information about the number of people with disabilities in the camp. Through simple conversations with the refugees we started our work.*

By seeking people out and taking time to get to know them, to discover about their difficulties and aspirations, JRS workers could identify the needs of their first clients, a group of 20 blind refugees:

The first questions we asked them were about their hopes, about what would encourage them to continue their lives in spite of their difficult situation. The presence of JRS staff made them feel something could change, that some of their dreams could come true: write in Braille, sing in a chorus, play the guitar or learn French. These desires were the objectives of the project, which was built with the participation of the refugees... We followed the same process with physically disabled men. Talking to them, it seemed that the greatest need was to produce and repair wheelchairs and prosthesis, projects aimed at self-reliance. They told us that they would like to learn French and tailoring. We added courses in Kiswahili, mathematics and accounts. The aim was to provide basic formation to organize small businesses.

As the projects got under way, JRS workers discerned needs other than those the refugees had mentioned. There was, for example, the necessity to confront *childish attitudes* among the blind refugees, arising out of a conviction that they should be the centre of attention. *They saw themselves only as broken*

people, says Fr Pons; he saw this self-image as a reaction to being the object of others' pity. Other perspectives which challenged efforts to empower refugees were complete discouragement and feeling useless, *they felt that they were a burden for their families or the hospital*. Value education – revolving around responsibility, solidarity, compassion and service – became an integral part of the programme as was the creation of a space where the refugees could speak about their problems and hopes.

At first, enthusing the refugees about what they could achieve through education proved to be an uphill task. *During our meetings, we helped the men become aware that they could start working for their country, even while in exile, that they should pursue formation to serve their country. It was a long struggle*. But the efforts of JRS workers eventually saw results when the refugees finally realised *that they could be useful in the camp, despite their disabilities*. During a Christmas celebration, students of the tailoring school presented uniforms they had made to primary school children. Jean-Baptiste, a young amputee said: *It's the first time I feel useful since I lost both my legs*.

The project in Panzi was empowering largely because JRS workers were committed to encouraging refugees to believe in themselves and in their ability to contribute to the community. The project saw positive results also because it offered refugees what they needed together with other elements included by JRS workers who discerned needs of which the refugees were not immediately aware. This was not a one-day process: perseverance was needed to get to know the refugees and where they were coming from.

Luena, Angola

Another initiative which exemplified the importance of laying solid foundations based on prevalent needs and specific circumstances was a programme in Luena, Angola. Like the programme in Panzi, this too provided vocational skills and support for people with special needs, namely landmine survivors among internally displaced people and the local community. Ultimately the project enabled people to move towards renewed dignity and hope; however it was preceded by months of preparation and even of initial failure. The account of Andrea Lari, former director for JRS in Angola, reveals how this trying time assured the project's long-term success.

Although the principles of serving and accompanying guiding JRS intervention were clear, the team needed to get to know the amputees better, and to understand the social and economic context in which they were living at that moment. It took a good nine

months of preparation before the first concrete activity started in September 1997. And I believe that those months were the most important period that helped to guarantee sustainability and success of the projects for the years to come.

The amputees represented a group not only separated from the resident community in Luena, but even from the displaced people themselves. Their living conditions were the worst. They found shelter in abandoned buildings or old train carriages. They were poorer than other displaced people due to the limited capacity to fend for themselves. Nor could they engage in economic activities that required strong and able-bodied people, like cultivating or carrying firewood. The JRS team worked initially with the 'community leaders', who represented the internally displaced people according to their areas of origin. Soon it became clear that JRS expectations to find strong solidarity among all the internally displaced people, and genuine concerns for amputees were not going to be met. The immediate failure of a community-based horticulture project, involving both families of amputees and of able-bodied persons convinced the team to change strategy. The reality was that in the context of Luena, where displacement was coupled with extreme poverty, all behaved according to the law of the jungle, in competition for survival. The traditional community ties and dynamics of mutual help had broken down completely.
The team decided to work with those families where some of the members were amputees. They were asked to choose a skill they wished to learn in order to facilitate their economic integration in the existing market and eventually to improve their family income. The most significant element of the new strategy was the close accompaniment of the families through frequent visiting, time spent together, and allowing the relationship between JRS team members and family members to grow beyond mere partnership in projects. The vocational courses were very demanding, requiring the students to spend at least half a day for four days a week attending classes. It was amazing that students agreed not to receive assistance in kind throughout the duration of the course. JRS focused instead on involving their spouses in existing projects and helping their children to return to school through a special project implemented with the local diocesan primary school.

I must say that the most impressive result of those months of hard work and of frequent challenges was not the success of the training courses, although attendance and graduation rates reached between 70 and 80 per cent. It was rather the dignity regained by the amputees and their families. They moved away slowly from dependence to taking more control of their lives. They generated new ideas for the future, based on the desire to improve their living conditions and to support their children so that they could go to school. And slowly these ideas started to become

realities. Paulo, who attended a 12 month long course in carpentry, started his own business, moved out of the camp and began to build a proper house in town. Nelito's children graduated after two years of intensive courses at the JRS special school and re-entered the local school system. Luisa is now sitting by the local market with her sewing machine and she produces school uniforms at competitive prices, managing to support her family. In these and many other cases, human dignity was restored and hope continued to shape these people's lives.

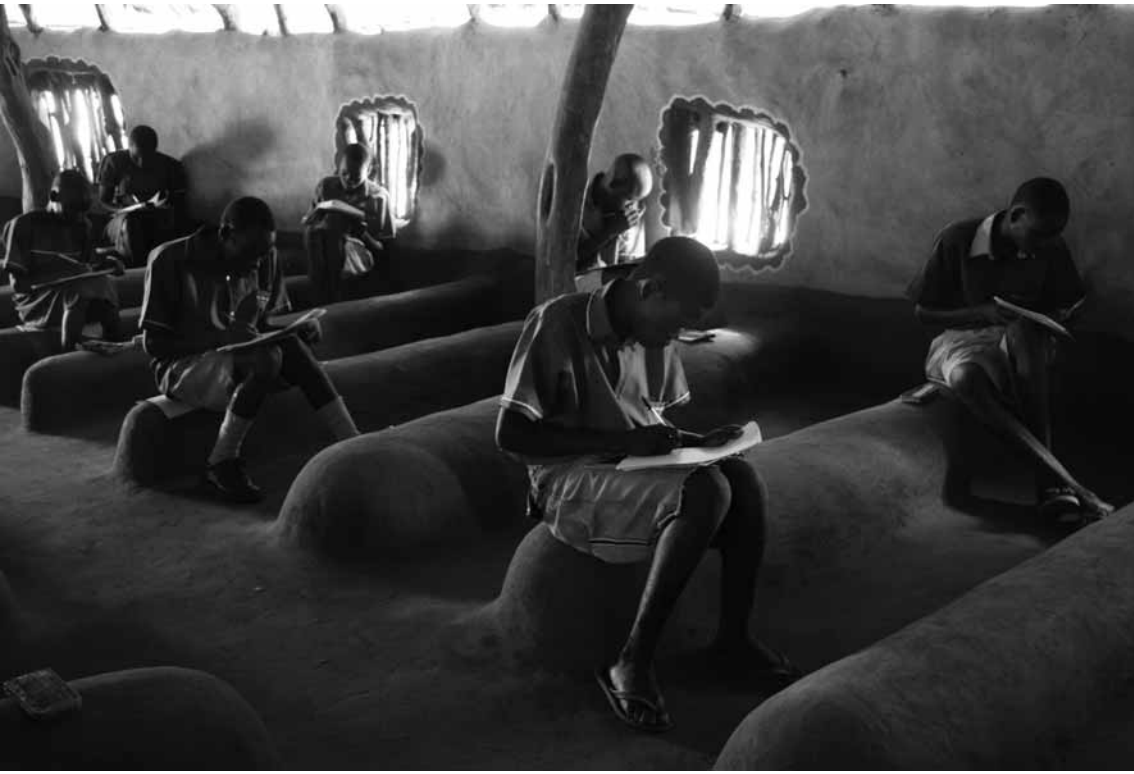
2. Enabling a community: involvement of refugees in their children's schools

As JRS workers move with refugees and build friendships with them, mutual trust is established and projects are born out of a shared understanding of what needs to be done for whom, and how it should be achieved. In the process, JRS workers evaluate the potential found among the refugees, identifying gaps in skills and knowledge to plan how best to support them. This is a decisive factor in encouraging maximum participation; in fact, we can go so far as to say that an initiative which does not enable participants to assume eventual responsibility for a programme cannot be described as truly educative.

Southern Sudan and Nepal

The running of schools offers a good example of how refugees and JRS work together to provide an indispensable community service. Gaps are filled with programmes focused on teacher training and school management, as explained by Saluwen S. Yoasa about schools for internally displaced people in southern Sudan:

Launching an initiative is one thing and directing it quite another. The refugees were good at the former but had problems with the latter. When JRS came to support education, it established School Management Committees (SMC) in collaboration with the refugee parents and local education authorities. These committees, together with Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) were given training on school management. This training enabled them to carry out SMC mandatory functions, which include preparation of school plans, monitoring of school projects, supervision of teaching and learning, and management of discipline in the school. JRS is now a partner of the committees. Quality education requires quality teaching. The need to improve the quality of the teachers presented the schools and the refugee community with a challenge, which they could not address themselves. Regular in-service courses have been carried out. Most of these courses targeted the untrained teachers and aimed at improving their teaching skills.



Schoolwork in Nimule, south Sudan ©*Don Doll SJ/JRS*

In this way, JRS empowers refugee communities to run their own schools, working with refugees as partners and targeting resources to work on improving their skills. The following description of the Bhutanese Refugee Education Programme (BREP), implemented by JRS in camps in Nepal, illustrates refugees' involvement in their children's schools:

The schools are supported by UNHCR and CARITAS Nepal and directly managed and run by some 1,100 Bhutanese refugee teachers. JRS personnel extend their service as administrators and resource teachers. The head teachers and the teachers are assisted by the parents and the Camp Management Committee in their challenging task. This gives a new meaning to refugee education as the tutor and the taught share the same life and hopes.

The shared management of schools makes a strong case for the benefits of community participation as refugees learn skills which will promote social and economic growth and serve them well back home. PTAs and SMCs, like those under way in southern Sudan, are platforms for participation not only for parents but for the wider community too. A PTA which counts among its members people from a range of ages and occupations plays an important part in enhancing the provision and quality of education. Input from elders and leaders of women and student associations as well as religious and civic groups has proven very useful.

The extent of community participation is influenced by how much leeway the authorities give to refugees and to organisations implementing projects. Sometimes possibilities may be restricted, as in cases where the education ministry of the host country determines which curriculum should be used. However, parents can usually have a say on who teaches their children, on what they want them to learn about values, religious practices, and cultural heritage.

The importance of involving parents first of all in the education of their children cannot be overestimated. Fostering a relationship with parents is vital to make them more aware of their strengths and to enhance this potential by making them increasingly skilled in nurturing their child's and their own learning and growth. As a rule, refugee parents are eager to be involved. Their enthusiasm is expressed in many ways, starting with literally building schools from scratch.

In Lobone, an impoverished town in southern Sudan, JRS supports a secondary school. The team reported with pride on another phase of development of the school when a Board of Governors was launched on 29 October 2004. The 15-member board was selected from different sectors of the community including JRS, which was represented by the project director. The JRS team in Lobone reported: *The members were enthusiastic about their new responsibility and they pledged to improve the secondary school. In his commissioning speech, the administrator urged them to be true representatives of the community which owns the school. He told them they should work without fear or favour and asked them to listen attentively to the concerns of the people about the school and the teachers.*

A strong partnership between refugees and implementers of school projects is crucial to making education work, especially given the challenges and constraints which abound. Funding is one major concern: the past years have seen a decrease in the amount of money made available by governments and UN agencies to education projects for refugees and displaced people. This decision reflects global economic trends as well as donor fatigue, especially towards countries where crises are endemic and protracted. The deficit in funding has a seriously detrimental impact on the quality of education, because the shortfall affects both the remuneration of teachers and the amount of materials provided. However, many programmes are running well in spite of economic constraints. This is the case when there is a sense of partnership between refugees and implementers, where decisions as to the best use of funds are made together and where monitoring and financial transparency go hand in hand.

So JRS teams do not just encourage, they expect refugees to take an active part in planning and decision making, in selection of teachers and in actually teaching in and leading workshops. Implementing projects is a partnership, paving the way for a handover of the schools to the refugee community.

3. A model of community schools: pre-school and nursery programmes

Projects consistently marked by sound collaboration are nursery and pre-school programmes, a feature of JRS services in Africa, Asia and Southeast Europe. Establishing pre-schools is a direct response to the concern expressed by refugee parents about children in camps who are officially judged as too old for day care programmes yet too young to enter primary school.

Lukole camp, Tanzania

This was the case in Tanzania's Lukole camp for refugees from Burundi and Rwanda, where there was no formal education for children aged less than seven years. This lack was sharply felt: the youngest children were traumatised by the disruption caused by journey into exile and life in a camp, and they needed a safe and structured environment with routine activities. Hélène Héaulme, former JRS project director in Lukole, said the pre-school project was set up to meet the children's needs and parents' concerns:

Families were not happy that children were spending days in the open, with nothing to do. Parents asked JRS to help them to provide education. We agreed to start a project, planning to eventually build five pre-schools for six-year-olds, and to train teachers in nursery methods. The objectives were to give children a better environment than the dusty camp roads, to educate them using appropriate methods for their age, and to prepare them to enter primary school.

A typical feature of pre-school and nursery programmes is that they are community-supported activities, and Lukole is no exception. Says Ms Héaulme: These are 'community schools'. *They belong to the refugees themselves, and the community participates in making them work, because the schools are for their own children*. This commitment translates into concrete contributions from parents and the rest of the community in all aspects of the project: *Parents are responsible for making mud-bricks for the construction of the schools. Other refugees use their talents and skills on behalf of the young children. An artist from the community took on the decoration of the schools, painting doors and windows. Parents help in the distribution of porridge, and organising an annual meal prepared with vegetables from the school garden. The teachers invite the parents for several feasts: opening of the school, Christmas, Easter, end of the school-year.*

Parents join the learning process, with community meetings about the objectives of pre-schools, the pedagogy used, why corporal punishment is not allowed, and topics such as children's rights and health and hygiene.
Beyond enhancement of parental skills, the pre-school project in Lukole has made its mark on the community at large by raising widespread awareness about education. Its significant contribution is boosted by initiatives undertaken jointly with Radio Kwizera, another JRS project in the refugee camps in western Tanzania. Together the projects make for a holistic, community-based approach to pre-primary education. The radio informs the community about pre-schools and helps to raise parents' awareness about the importance of edu-

cation, motivating them to become more involved. On another level, Radio Kwizera programmes make effective teaching and learning material. In one joint endeavour, Radio Kwizera gave six solar radios to the pre-schools, so that six-year-old pupils could listen to educative programmes devoted especially to them. Radio is a good way to develop children's language (listening and speaking) skills, especially listening ability, which is normally swiftly acquired during pre-schools years.
For the teachers, it is new pedagogical material which enriches their teaching repertoire and improves their knowledge.

Radio Kwizera has helped the pre-schools to raise awareness about children with special needs. This thrust came as the pre-school project launched a special education unit for children with disabilities in July 2003. Five different groups were set up in two schools, according to disability and age and each has a unique programme to teach skills geared towards maximum independence. Activities focus on communication and they include sensory education, language games, games of logic, concept of space and time, the human body, activities of daily life, psychomotor and art activities, manual work, music, stories and imaginative exercises.

The special education unit draws on participation from the community: parents are closely involved in the initiative and teachers collaborate with coaches trained by another NGO, Olympic Aid to offer sports activities.

More than five years after JRS started the pre-school project, responsibility for running the schools is increasingly passing into the hands of the community, although JRS still assists with teacher-training and other activities.

Adjumani, northern Uganda

Elsewhere, JRS is equally successful in promoting and supporting community endeavours focused on nursery education. Veteran JRS educators, Virginia Hasson RSM and Lolín Menéndez RSCJ, elaborated the kind of support nursery schools and pre-schools usually need from JRS: *Refugee parents can be expected to devote some time to nursery school development and support, but in most cases it is unrealistic to demand they provide all the material support to the teachers and for the curriculum.*
Any available qualified teachers are engaged by the primary or secondary schools. JRS cooperates with the community by identifying potential teachers for nursery schools and by providing teacher-training, incentives, and basic materials.

The nursery school programme in Adjumani, northern Uganda, where JRS has trained teachers in more than 50 nursery schools, is another model of partnership between JRS and the community. JRS funds repair of structures, teacher-training and incentives, and gives stationery every term. Parents' assumption of responsibility for the schools is described by Leila Mary, coordinator of the nursery programme in Adjumani: *Based on my experience with JRS for the last four years, I can see that now all the refugee communities are responsible for the pre-school education of their children. When refugees settled in their camps, they were sensitized to open nursery schools. These are community-based schools where parents have the following responsibilities: choosing a site for the school; selecting teaching and other staff, paying funds, selecting PTAs and SMCs to govern the schools.*

4. Working with host communities

Interaction between the community and implementers of education projects extends beyond the close circle of beneficiaries, namely learners and their parents. As illustrated above, JRS looks to wider circles within the refugee population, involving community leaders, student unions and other civil society groups, as well as NGOs at work in the camp. And there are still broader circles engaged in education, chief among them the host government and community.

The attitude of host governments varies greatly. Some gladly welcome and collaborate in efforts to provide education to refugees, seeing (and rightly so) an opportunity to enhance the quality of education provided to nationals living in refugee-affected areas. Some ministries supervise refugee schools regularly and insist that national regulations and standards be followed. In some cases, there is little or no involvement, especially when the national education system is in a state of crisis. In such cases, the provision of education becomes more problematic. It is left to the goodwill of NGOs and church groups to develop and offer programmes according to the possibilities open to them.
In underdeveloped regions – which host the highest number of refugees worldwide – countries welcoming thousands of refugees are usually poor. The local population living alongside refugees is frequently worse off because they do not normally receive services while assistance is provided in camps. Disparities can cause tension and sometimes conflict which work to the detriment of both groups. JRS personnel try to be sensitive to the needs and hopes of the people among whom the refugees live – often they have the same needs for access and quality of education – and some JRS projects have sought to address the situation of inequality directly.

Dzaleka camp, Malawi

One way of doing this, which engenders mutual benefits for both sides, is supporting local schools which accept refugee students. One example is the Umodzi Katubza primary school in Malawi, constructed by JRS to cater for refugee children from Dzaleka camp and for local children. The school was built in a road near the camp with the aim, right from the beginning, of serving both communities. The school follows the Malawian curriculum, and French and Kiswahili are taught too. Teachers are both nationals and refugees. The complete cycle of primary education is offered at the school, which is registered and recognized by the Malawian Examination Board as an Examination Centre. In 2005, collaboration was extended to an already existing community secondary school near Dzaleka camp. The refugees are now able to attend and the school receives support from JRS to the benefit of all.

Apart from the clear advantage such a solution brings of promoting integration and peaceful living between the two communities, the school has also increased refugees' freedom of movement. Until the school was opened, refugees had been confined to a compound that was once a maximum-security prison, and where schools provided for children were made from iron sheets or tents.

Northern Uganda

In northern Uganda, thousands of refugees from southern Sudan live in open settlements rather than camps, alongside local communities. Meanwhile, attacks by the rebel Lord's Resistance Army displace thousands of Ugandans in the region.

Since the beginning of the influx of Sudanese refugees, the thrust towards the integration of services provided to refugees into those available to the local population has been an objective of the government and NGOs, at least on paper. Hence, local communities as well as refugees benefit from construction of schools, clinics, roads, and the drilling of bore holes.

In settlements where JRS has worked and is still present, local children spontaneously join refugee children's schools and vice-versa. In Adjumani and Moyo districts, where JRS implements secondary school education with UNHCR, the government has slowly been taking on and integrating refugee secondary schools with the local population.

Tamilnadu, India

Mixed schooling is also the norm for Sri Lankan refugee children and youth living in 103 camps scattered across Tamilnadu, India. Apart from running supplementary education services in the camps, JRS supports two local government schools, funding teachers to close staffing gaps when the need arises.

Attending school in the community gives children and teenagers the possibility of getting out of the camps. The integration of youth has another value in this context; Sri Lankan refugees were saddled with collective blame when the Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger rebels killed Rajiv Gandhi, the former Indian Prime Minister, in Tamilnadu in 1991. The refugees were shunned by the local community and authorities for years after, and their children were banned from attending local schools until 1996. The re-integration of refugees in schools surely contributed in no small way to drawing the two communities closer together.

Not an optional extra

JRS education projects do not happen in isolation. The first step of JRS workers is always to draw refugees into planning and execution of projects, making the most of this collaboration by learning from refugees and helping them to maximise their potential. Sharing the running of projects with refugees is not an optional extra: it is a key to the project's success.

In partnership, JRS and the refugees are sometimes called to deal with the host government and local community to determine the scope and design of education projects. Thus education often becomes a way of drawing communities together and of promoting integration, one of the many uses of education which will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

Ultimately, the emphasis on communal participation is another way of casting the net of education as far out as possible, in a bid to fulfil its universal aim of offering hope through opportunities for learning to all.

"My people are like bamboo", a Vietnamese woman once told me, "an isolated plant, however strong, can be blown down; while many plants standing together can resist every challenge."

Mark Raper SJ
Servir no.1, Nov. 1993

On the way to school in Tamilnadu, India

Chapter 5

"To reach peace, teach peace": education for peace, reconciliation and human rights

Hope constantly gives new impulse to the commitment to justice and peace as well as firm confidence in the possibility of building a better world.
Pope John Paul II, 2005 World Peace Day message

Commitment to peace is a priority which permeates the service of JRS. No mission among forcibly displaced people would make a real difference if it were otherwise. Exile is a direct result of the breakdown of peace and refugees are survivors of war, of division borne of hate and of injustice. They hope for peace and justice in their countries because this could pave the way for return home.

As people who have suffered multiple trauma and loss, refugees also need to regain internal peace. Many refugees find themselves paralysed by their distress. Some harbour resentment and even hatred because of wrongs inflicted. These feelings then become in themselves a reason to survive, at worst finding expression in armed struggle. Joaquím Pons SJ discovered this in Panzi camp in Bukavu: *We realised that the people with whom we worked had accumulated much hatred and discouragement because of the war. So we created a space where they could be reconciled with themselves. Many times the language used was that of victims, judging those who were good and those who were bad. This paralysed their efforts towards reconciliation.*

Educators among refugees find themselves uniquely placed to provide a forum for promoting peace as an integral part of all their projects. Previous chapters highlighted literacy or language classes, for example, where refugees were guided to debate issues like conflict prevention. Depending on the culture, the community may be helped towards reconciliation through theatre and dance, songs and choirs, counselling, formation of teachers and leaders.

Many projects, especially in the lead-up to repatriation and in post-war contexts, focus exclusively on peace education with a view to rebuilding communities. Principles guiding JRS peace initiatives are sensitivity to cultural and historical contexts and an emphasis on enhancing grassroots peace building capacities.

The experience of JRS in peace education has underlined the need to promote tolerance towards forcibly displaced people among host populations. This is a role JRS is increasingly taking on, especially in more developed countries where asylum seekers face a dwindling welcome and mounting hostility. JRS teams usually adopt a two-pronged approach: teaching local communities about the plight of refugees and about their rights on the one hand and promoting integration of refugees in local communities through language courses and other training programmes.

1. First steps towards peace

Motivated by the firm belief that peace starts at home and is spread by each one of us, JRS educators give priority to instilling positive values and good behaviour in projects for school children, starting from those of pre-school age.

Lukole, Tanzania

In one case, the JRS pre-school programme in Lukole camp in western Tanzania collaborate with other agencies to offer peace education among refugees and local children. JRS workers describe the project implemented among children from different linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds as *a tremendous witness to building up unity and teamwork in diversity. In this context difference can be accepted as gift rather than as threat.*

The ultimate aim of the project is to open children's minds to absorb respect and tolerance for others. Say members of the Lukole staff: *The project works on values of sharing, freedom of expression and peace, emphasising the concept of 'togetherness'. Children assimilate these values by experiencing them: if they live in peace, if they meet differences in friendship and confidence, they will improve their skills for living peacefully with others.*

Such fundamental values are shared with to the children in simple yet effective ways. Typically, children from different camp schools are gathered to play together on a regular basis. First they greet each other in every language used by others, as their teachers would have taught them days before. Every group brings drawings of their school, to introduce the place where they study. The day ends by sharing food together. Other objectives are developing competitiveness in the right way, being cooperative and having fun together.

For pre-school refugee children, peace education is doubly crucial because they pick up information about war in their country, Burundi, so they are

aware something is happening there. More than other children, they need to 'learn peace' to take it back with them to their country.

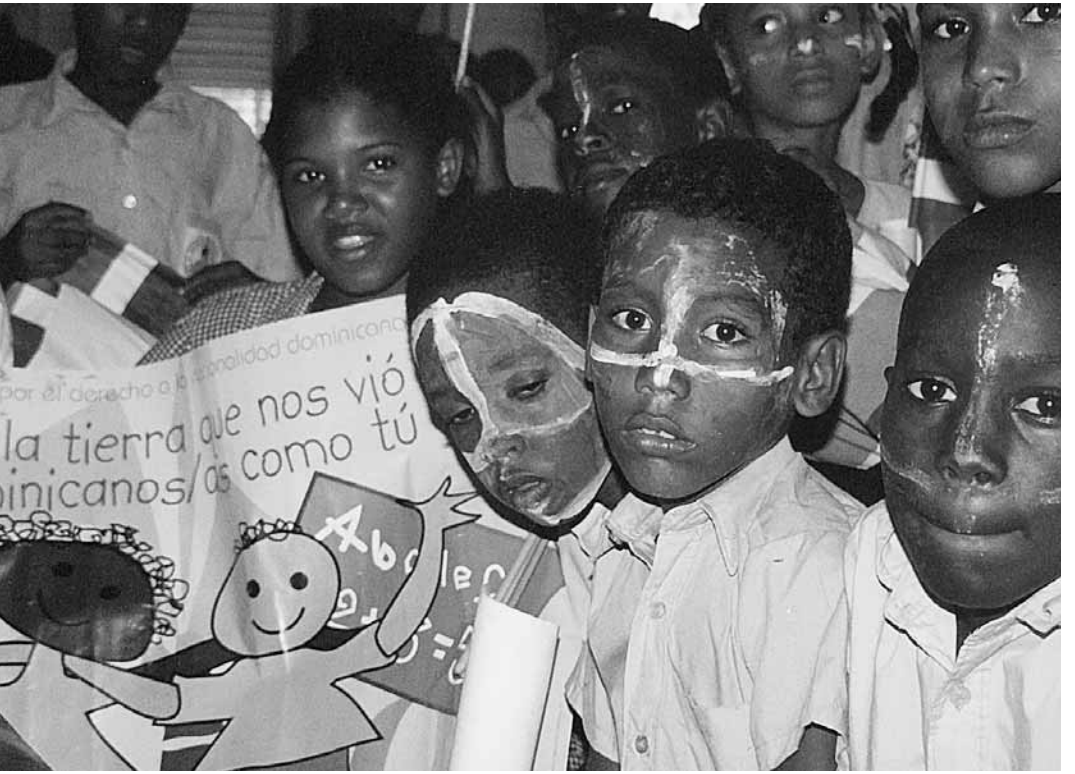
Adjumani, Uganda

In Adjumani, northern Uganda, an innovative project launched among the camp schools is Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) clubs. Saluwen Yoasa says the clubs give children *a voice to press for their rights*. Teachers are assigned to serve as patrons for ARC clubs. Another initiative geared at making schools healthy, friendly learning environments is the concept of Child Friendly Schools (CFS). Says Mr Yoasa: *The guidelines are based on UNICEF/Republic of Uganda guidelines. They require schools to be rights-based, gender-friendly, healthy, safe and protective for children, and to have school-community linkages. Teachers are encouraged to organise inter-school visits to learn from each other about the CFS*.

Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic too, JRS aims to make children aware of their rights as part of a wider strategy to lobby for the rights of Haitian migrants and Dominico-Haitians, a mission undertaken within a network of NGOs. On 10 December 2002, to mark Human Rights Day, JRS organised a community day in the Santo Domingo barrio of Los Guandules where it works. About 600 children – both of Dominican and Haitian descent – marched through the barrio, their faces painted with the Dominican flag and carrying posters and slogans, calling for birth certificates and recognition of their Dominican nationality. More than half the residents of Los Guandules do not possess a birth certificate; although born in the Dominican Republic, they are denied their right to Dominican nationality. With the use of clowns, puppets and theatre, JRS held a workshop for the children to explain their right to Dominican nationality and why their families must try to obtain their birth certificates.

Amid frequent abuse of Haitians' rights and violent attacks against them, JRS is committed to bringing Dominicans and Haitians together to understand each other better. Among other initiatives, JRS has run an integrated primary school and promotes enrolment of Haitian children in public schools. In cooperation with other NGOs and networks, JRS has carried out several awareness-raising activities, such as workshops, press conferences and national roundtables on migration and anti-racism.



Campaigning for rights, Dominican Republic ©*JRS Dominican Republic*

2. Broadcasting peace

Radio Kwizera, Tanzania

When we talk about listening to forcibly displaced persons, we must be clear about what we mean. We need to ensure they are empowered to improve their lives. That is why we broadcast directly to the refugees in a language they understand. They are not only informed of the security situation in Burundi, they are also encouraged to contact the station and to give their views directly to their politicians.
Elias Mokua SJ, Radio Kwizera, JRS Tanzania

One JRS project given over to promoting peace, justice and reconciliation is Radio Kwizera in western Tanzania. Radio Kwizera is based in Ngara and Kibondo districts, reaching refugees across several camps, local communities in rural villages as well as people across the border in Rwanda and Burundi. Its range makes Radio Kwizera – *kwizera* means *hope* in the Kinyarwanda language – well placed to fulfil its mission to promote reconciliation and peace.

Radio Kwizera was set up in 1995 for refugees who fled the genocide in Rwanda; the idea behind creating a radio station was to counter Radio Milles Collines, which had just been used to deadly effect in Rwanda. The aim of Radio Kwizera was to do the opposite: to spread dialogue and reconciliation and to provide balanced, accurate and comprehensive information.

The radio's commitment to reconciliation prompted it to launch a joint project with Studio Ijambo, a radio station in Burundi in June 2002, to use radio as a tool of conflict prevention. The project was launched in the context of facilitated repatriation of Burundians; it aimed to fill a critical need for objective information and to launch a dialogue through radio programmes between Burundians on both sides of the border.

The basic approach of Radio Kwizera – its set-up, staff and programmes – speaks of reconciliation. It seeks out common ground among radio listeners: in the style of a community radio, everyone – refugees and nationals, Catholics, Protestants, Muslims – is directly involved. Programmes are broadcast in Kirundi, Kiswahili, English and French. The radio broadcasts for 14 hours a day and this, according to its staff, gives the station a strong identity. Audience surveys reveal the radio is well-liked, a success which Radio Kwizera staff attribute to the *popular approach* adopted:
Making it a popular station has been the right approach; it must be popular so that

information broadcast will be listened to. Our programmes are devised to inform, educate and entertain. The station has, for example, used the device of radio soap opera to deal with important issues such as AIDS. It is a question of maintaining a balance between information programming and music and entertainment.

Radio Kwizera certainly gives plenty of information. News bulletins feature local, national, regional and international news, always with an eye to promoting peace. Say the staff: *Local news is gathered by Radio Kwizera reporters who travel throughout the locality and the camps. The language used is important so that coverage doesn't relay information in terms of ethnicity, for instance.* Programming in general has a wide educational and peace focus covering human rights, religious teaching, gender and cultural issues, agriculture and nutrition. The radio station also broadcasts peace-building programmes. Another initiative is promotion of health awareness campaigns – AIDS, cholera, malaria and immunisation among others – which are often undertaken in collaboration with UN bodies and other NGOs.

Radio Negage, Angola

Using radio as a medium to transmit awareness about peace and human rights has been adopted as a strategy elsewhere in JRS. In 2003, in post-war Angola, JRS took to the air to launch a series of *Know your rights* programmes on Radio Negage in the northwest of the country. The programme was well timed to reach Angolans struggling to reach a situation of normalcy after 27 years of civil war. The initiative aimed to help Angolans develop new ways of solving conflicts based on rights and responsibilities.

Every Saturday night at 7pm, Radio Negage broadcast a 30-minute programme on different aspects of human rights and responsibilities. The broadcast featured music with peace themes like reconciliation, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the African Charter of Human Rights.

The programme had immediate and concrete results: for example, having heard the broadcast on the right to education, a group of students who had begun the school term without a classroom presented their grievance to the Director of Schools, and a classroom was provided. Similarly, JRS Angola heard that many people raised land-related issues with their local authorities, with some success, following another of the transmissions.

Motivated by the positive response, JRS Angola formed a group of human

rights advisers to discuss related issues via the radio. The ultimate aim was to pave the way for national campaigners eventually to take over the human rights awareness programme.

3. Peace education for repatriation and reconstruction

The concept of peace education is evolving rapidly and specialised programmes are fast becoming an integral part of services offered to refugees and displaced people. Not surprisingly, the demand for peace education shoots up as agreements to end conflict are signed, refugees return home and rebuilding starts in earnest among war-torn communities. JRS teams are actively involved in such endeavours.

Uganda and Sudan

The input of JRS in developing peace education programmes among people displaced by the war in southern Sudan – in Sudan itself as well as among refugees in northern Uganda – reflects a comprehensive approach which has a tangible impact. A peace programme was badly needed in these areas to encourage people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds to live together in a post-war situation. The need became more urgent than ever as refugees started to repatriate voluntarily to Sudan, first because of rebel attacks in northern Uganda and then after peace was reached between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). There was a strong sense of mutual suspicion between internally displaced people in Sudan and refugees in Uganda, and hostile incidents occurred in southern Sudan when refugees returned. The displaced people saw the returnees as people who had not contributed to the liberation process of Sudan, while the returnees viewed some of the internally displaced as responsible for their exile to Uganda.

Sensitisation initiatives were launched to facilitate the repatriation and reintegration process. JRS has made a dynamic contribution to the development of programmes in many camps in Uganda as well as in Sudan itself. The main vehicle of peace education is community workshops attended by thousands of people: in 2004 alone, 8,000 refugees underwent training in such workshops in northern Uganda. Isaac Ijjo, national peace education coordinator for JRS-UNHCR, says the workshops target all sectors of civil society as well as schools.

The peace education projects in northern Uganda strengthen community-based

peace building strategies for refugee leaders, women, youth and community workers. By examining attitudes, building upon community values, knowledge and skills, appropriate solutions can be found to prevent or minimise conflict and resolve disputes. Culturally appropriate peace education materials were produced for use in core and extracurricular activities, strengthening the programme's application within primary and secondary schools.

JRS conducts workshops among internally displaced people and returnees in southern Sudan too, developing peace building and conflict resolution skills within families and communities. As always, peace education programmes are implemented hand in hand with the community, and facilitators are trained in basic counselling techniques, as well as management and mobilisation skills. Sometimes church leaders are targeted as in Yei County, a strategic location which links Sudan by road to both Uganda and the DRC and which is home to thousands of displaced people and returnees. Here workshops are held for church leaders, emphasising the role of churches in peace building.

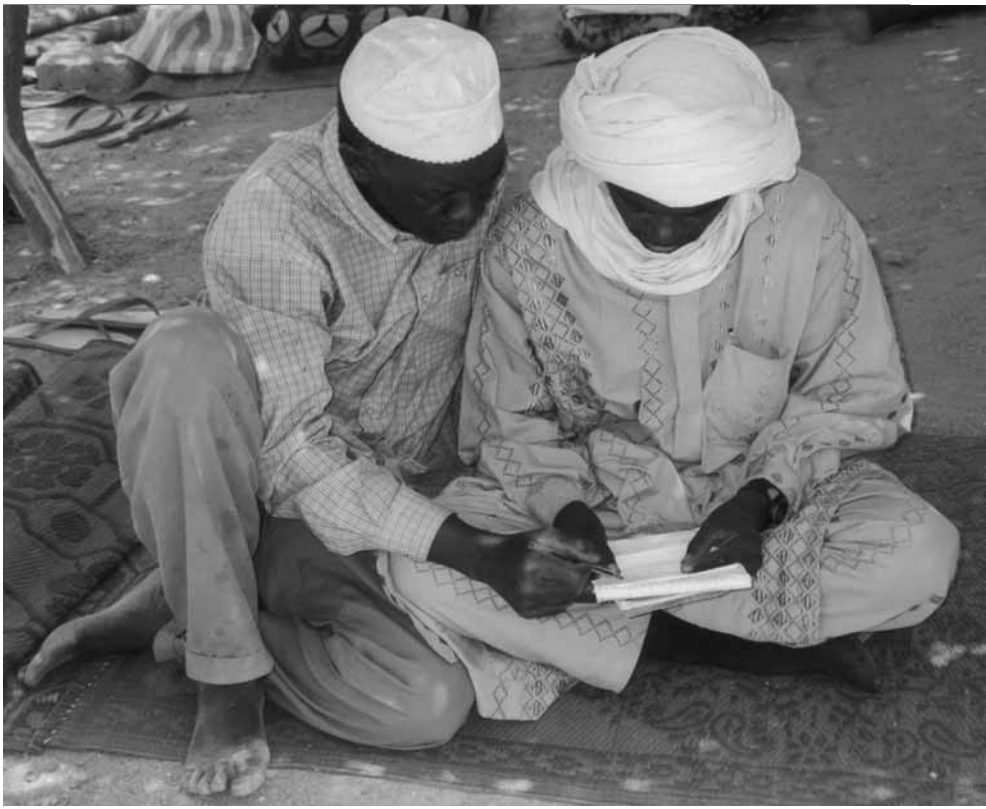
Are the workshops successful in achieving their aim to sow seeds for peace? It is difficult to say, and perhaps only time will tell, but the feedback of participants, like the moving testimony of Julia Wadu, offers some clues:

Before attending the peace education community workshop I thought it was a waste of time as the programme takes five days to give knowledge and skills for conflict prevention and minimisation, which I thought I knew. Until I attended this workshop, reconciling those in conflict never occurred to me. I can testify about a personal experience with my enemy from the same church. For years we could not greet each other, eat together, and we even detested the presence of the other in any gathering. The knowledge I acquired from the workshop in the session about reconciliation and forgiveness not only challenged me personally but prompted me to take action. After the workshop I decided to approach my long-time enemy suggesting reconciliation and now we are reconciled, staying together, sharing food and practically everything.
For Mr Ijjo, one of the significant achievements of the programme is the creation of peace groups which capitalise on the attitudes and skills instilled in workshops. Through these voluntary groups, thousands of workshop graduates engage in concrete community activities on both sides of the border. *The group members have become strong advocates for human rights, especially for vulnerable groups, and in partnership with other agencies, they are often sought by the local courts to identify and settle problems.*
Their activities include problem-solving at family level, giving support to vulnerable

groups such as the elderly, widows and the disabled by renovating their houses, digging their gardens and fetching water and firewood. They also carry out sensitisation campaigns using drama, songs and poems on various peace-related issues, including domestic violence, HIV/Aids, alcoholism and tribal sentiments. They make visits to the sick and contribute food and other goods at funerals.

Peace education programmes in southern Sudan and northern Uganda continue and are ever in demand. Meanwhile JRS is gaining valuable experience which will contribute to making future initiatives in this sphere more effective. Perhaps the most significant insight learned is that peace-building is no simple matter. In Mr Ijjo's words: *One of the lessons learnt is that peace education is a complex project, which involves transforming individuals positively in order to achieve constructive behaviour and attitudes in the entire community. Since peace-building takes place in the affective domain of the individual, it is necessarily a very painstaking form of intervention, and the apparent lack of results in the initial stages is sometimes frustrating.*

Hard as it may be, especially at the beginning, and however little programmes may seem to achieve when viewed against the immense challenges at hand, peace education does promise to make a difference. In the words of Yaba Dario, a local chief from Olikwi, Nimule Payam: *The peace education programme in view of repatriation provides the best possible solution to effective integration of returnees with local communities.*



Adult literacy class in Chad ©*Lolin Menendez RSCJ/JRS*

4. A regional approach focused on reconciliation

The complexities and frustrations – sometimes even the heartbreaking despair – which beset peace initiatives have been experienced by JRS workers around the world. Sometimes reconciliation efforts are undertaken in very tense circumstances, even in countries torn apart by war, where mutual mistrust and even hatred between groups divided by ethnic, religious or other differences run deep.

Southeast Europe

Few can testify to this better than the director for JRS in Southeast Europe, Stjepan Kušan SJ, who steered his teams through years of ethnic conflict and post-war hostilities. The Jesuit Superior-General, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ, paid tribute to the efforts of Fr Kušan: *JRS and the Society are called, together with the rest of the Church, to work for peace. Witnessing to reconciliation is a role the Church should play everywhere and its contributions should be solid, 'love not in words but in deeds'.*

Ever since JRS started up in the region in 1993, the fundamental goal underlying all services delivered has been to build bridges. *It is very difficult to start working systemically for reconciliation while armed conflict continues, notes a report of the first year of operations. In our projects, we will continue to bring people together.* It has been a tough job even to talk about drawing people together in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and other countries in the region, where successive wars in the past decade left a pervasive legacy of deep ethnic mistrust. The contribution of JRS to changing the status quo has unfolded in many ways, principally in the creation of multi-ethnic teams and the provision of services to all regardless of race or religion. Another crucial intervention strategy has been teaming up with Serb-Orthodox organisations to offer aid while assisting Orthodox seminarians in their studies and supporting Serb returnees to Croatia. Reaching out across the ethnic divide proved to be a risky business however the concrete results have made it worthwhile.

There is, for example, a pre-school project in Knin, a city in Croatia which was dominated by Serbs before war broke out. JRS set up the pre-school after the war to cater for Serbs and Croatians, be they refugees, internally displaced people or returnees. Children from outlying villages – some as far as 40km away – are brought to Knin every day for school. The project director, Boja Gajica, who is from Knin, said that apart from providing a safe environment for children, the pre-school serves to bring parents together. *Parents have never*

complained that we have children of different ethnicities together. When they bring their children to school or as they wait for them later, parents chat among themselves and they have become friends, helping each other to collect the children. We celebrate both Catholic and Orthodox feasts: the parents understand what we are doing and they are really helping us.

The joy Ms Gajica's work has brought her reflects hope renewed in the aftermath of war by working for peace. *It is a beautiful experience for me to work with JRS because I have met good people from all over former Yugoslavia. I am tired, but it is nice to be tired like this. The war wounded our soul. JRS meant so much to me because before I felt hopeless. Now I can survive as a human being and I can hope to help others too. When you help others, you are helping yourself. Even since I started, my heart has become more and more full.*

Equipping people to rebuild a strong civil community based on solid values has been another objective of JRS in Southeast Europe. In 1996, an innovative development project was launched to offer training seminars for lay people in social and pastoral ministry. The programme is conducted in collaboration with the Craighead Institute in Glasgow, Scotland, offering lay people training in trust building, social analysis, planning and theological reflection.

Former director of the Institute, Christine Anderson FCJ, recalls how the project started: *The first request came during the war from Stjepan Kušan asking us to prepare to run seminars - the war would finish and the country was coming out of communism - what processes could be put in place to help to build confidence and trust? That was the beginning of many journeys to Zagreb and Sarajevo. Throughout the next nine years, courses were offered to hundreds of people. At first they were delivered by Craighead staff but soon local staff members were trained to deliver programmes through the JRS infrastructure.*

The programme is now evolving into a training institute which will remain as a valuable community resource after JRS withdraws.

5. Teaching respect for refugee rights

The need for peace education is urgent not only among people from societies immersed in or recently emerging from conflict. More and more, JRS teams find themselves called to counter xenophobia in host countries targeting refugees and other people on the move. Growing indifference, mistrust or outright hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers are universal, insidi-

ous trends. A glance at news from practically anywhere in the world is sufficient proof: asylum seekers drenched with acid while sleeping rough in Pretoria, South Africa; Thai authorities summarily deporting Burmese refugees who came forward to seek help in the wake of the tsunami of 2004; planeloads of asylum seekers immediately flown back from Italy to Libya without even a chance to file an asylum claim.

Growing antagonism is reflected in a "fortress mentality" which pervades all levels of society, from punitive and restrictive laws which endanger the very right to seek asylum down to widespread racism among people on the street. Refugees make easy scapegoats for national ills – like unemployment and crime – and unscrupulous politicians and media frequently exploit commonly held fears through stereotyping and even downright lies, especially since the 11 September attacks.

Faced with this situation, especially in more developed countries and regions, JRS devotes substantial resources to fighting racism against refugees and asylum seekers and to promoting their integration. Strategies unfold on several fronts, targeting different levels of society, usually in partnership with the church, other NGOs, UN bodies, teaching institutions and of course refugees themselves. A vast range of means is adopted to get the message across. Rampe Hlobo SJ, former policy officer for JRS in South Africa noted: *Raising awareness about racism faced by refugees and asylum seekers is part of our daily work, as we try to counter the stereotyping and ignorance that widespread xenophobia is built on. To this end, JRS features in several interviews for radio and print media, and on television talk shows. And we have started going to schools, talking to students about the plight of refugees. It does make a difference: we are seeing more people asking to do volunteer work with refugees. We believe that by speaking out consistently and defending refugee rights, our small contribution can make a big difference.*

Slovenia

Sensitising students of all ages about refugee rights is a popular feature among JRS initiatives. In Slovenia, JRS held a poster competition for around 1,000 children. Tine Jenko SJ said the idea behind this project was to promote values of understanding and tolerance especially with regard to Bosnian refugees. *In Slovenia, as elsewhere in Europe, many children have quite a negative perception of refugees. For them, refugees are thieves, ruffians and dirty fellows. JRS Slovenia works to educate school children, especially to clarify who a refugee is. One project was called 'Welcoming our new friends – national poster competition on integration of Bosnian refugees into Slovenian society'.*

Together with a well-known stage actor, JRS prepared a play about accepting cultural diversity, to show children the difference between being accepted and being rejected. To encourage reflection on the benefits of a pluralistic society as a community of different cultures and faiths, the children were asked to produce a poster. In drawing the poster, children were invited to envisage how the integration of Bosnian refugees into Slovenian society could be possible.

Portugal

Several JRS teams in Europe have launched campaigns to raise awareness about refugee rights and about the benefits of immigration and consequent diversity. Portugal is one country where the JRS team professed itself *very happy with the outcomes of the project – we felt that many of the participants gained a new and more positive vision of immigration in general as well as of the potential inherent in a multicultural society.*

Rita Raimundo of JRS Portugal said the aim of the programme, 'Footsteps of all colours', which was taken to 55 schools in the space of one academic year, was to address the doubts and fears entertained by some Portuguese people in relation to refugees and other migrants. *We tried not only to present participants with an informed view of population movements, but to promote an emotional involvement with the subject. We focused on life stories and we were always accompanied by migrants who interacted with participants. The exchange proved to be very animated and students and teachers were keen to know more about what it feels like to be a foreigner in Portugal.*

Italy

In Italy, JRS Centro Astalli undertakes campaigns about refugee rights in schools. To complement this initiative, a resource book for students, *Nei panni dei rifugiati* (In the shoes of refugees) was prepared in collaboration with the Pontifical Gregorian University. The book includes a variety of themes related to asylum seekers and refugees: human rights, asylum law, women and children, refugees in Italy, famous refugees and cultural diversity. Each chapter offers refugee stories, songs, poems and web-links related to the chapter's theme as well as activities and games for the classroom. The resource book for students is accompanied by a guide book for teachers, which offers suggestions on ways in which the material can be adapted and applied to the school curriculum.

Language class for refugees in Portugal

© *Bruno Rascao*

6. Language classes: making integration a reality

Apart from making the host community aware that refugees have the right to belong, JRS teams offer the necessary services to enable refugees to feel at home. One service indispensable for integration is provision of language classes. Saliha, an Algerian refugee who fled to Italy, wrote her story for *Finestre*, a JRS Centro Astalli publication. She recalls her initial months in Rome, where she arrived completely traumatised and felt totally alienated: *The man in charge of the reception centre where I was staying showed me a newspaper advert and told me I could go to work as a maid. I told him I had not come to Italy to do such work. No one ever proposed that I should learn Italian. How could I work if I was unable to understand what I was told? It was only after some months in Italy that ... I enrolled in a school to learn Italian and slowly started to rebuild my life*. Another refugee who went to Centro Astalli, Amir from Iran, said: *First of all I want to thank the God of the world, who brought me alive in Italy and gave me the possibility to learn the language of Italians. If you speak well, you can work anywhere. I am really satisfied and I learn with joy, because languages are the bridges of the world*.

Romania

In Romania, JRS offers a project which encompasses a broad range of formal and informal education initiatives. One of its aims is to offer refugees and asylum seekers a working knowledge of the Romanian language and culture to facilitate their integration into society. JRS also provides computer skills and facilitates access to university for those who want to continue their studies.

JRS Romania focuses its services on refugee women because they face complex problems. Since many do not have qualifications or the Romanian government does not recognise their credentials, it is difficult for them to find a job and to earn their living. JRS workers offer them advice and help to further their social and professional integration in society.

Zambia

In Zambia, one of the main priorities of the JRS Peace Centre in Lusaka is teaching English as a foreign language. Most students are French-speaking refugees from the Great Lakes region plus a few from Angola and Somalia. Dr Kajingulu Somwe Mubenga, a refugee from DRC who is a teacher at the centre, says JRS has developed six-month language courses. *The programme has been developed into three main levels of proficiency: basic or elementary, intermediate and advanced. An emphasis is placed on the humanistic, linguistic, communicative, and cultural aspects of language teaching and learning.*

The students have brought a diversity of cultures to the Peace Centre, and English has been used as the only unifying factor that brings people of different cultures together. The students are now able to integrate into their new society and to socialise with their Zambian counterparts. They tell me: 'I didn't know how to read but now I am able to understand newspaper articles'.

A mission for peace

Formation for peace can and should be integrated into everything we do. As JRS workers and refugees develop friendships and work together, the day-to-day interaction becomes a space for all to reconcile with their past, heal memories and prepare for the future.

Yes! I believe that children can be ambassadors for peace. They can live peacefully with each other even if their parents are on different sides. I believe that someday peace will be our way of life in Aceh. Nevertheless, it takes time. Teachers have to work hard to build peace within our students' hearts. That is why I never teach any other grades than a first grade in elementary school. We can be more creative in the first grade. I can teach how to read by using peaceful words. Playing and hearing stories are the method of teaching in the first grade, so I tell them many stories about peace. The method is good as far as I can see. I never see my students hating each other.

Pudji Tursana, JRS North Sumatra

Chapter Six

Education: a basic entitlement which protects other rights

What future has a society or nation whose young people's lives have been ruined by war and displacement? What chance of future development has a community whose youth are without education and whose lives have been scarred by trauma, abuse or recruitment?
Lluìs Magriñá SJ, International Director, JRS

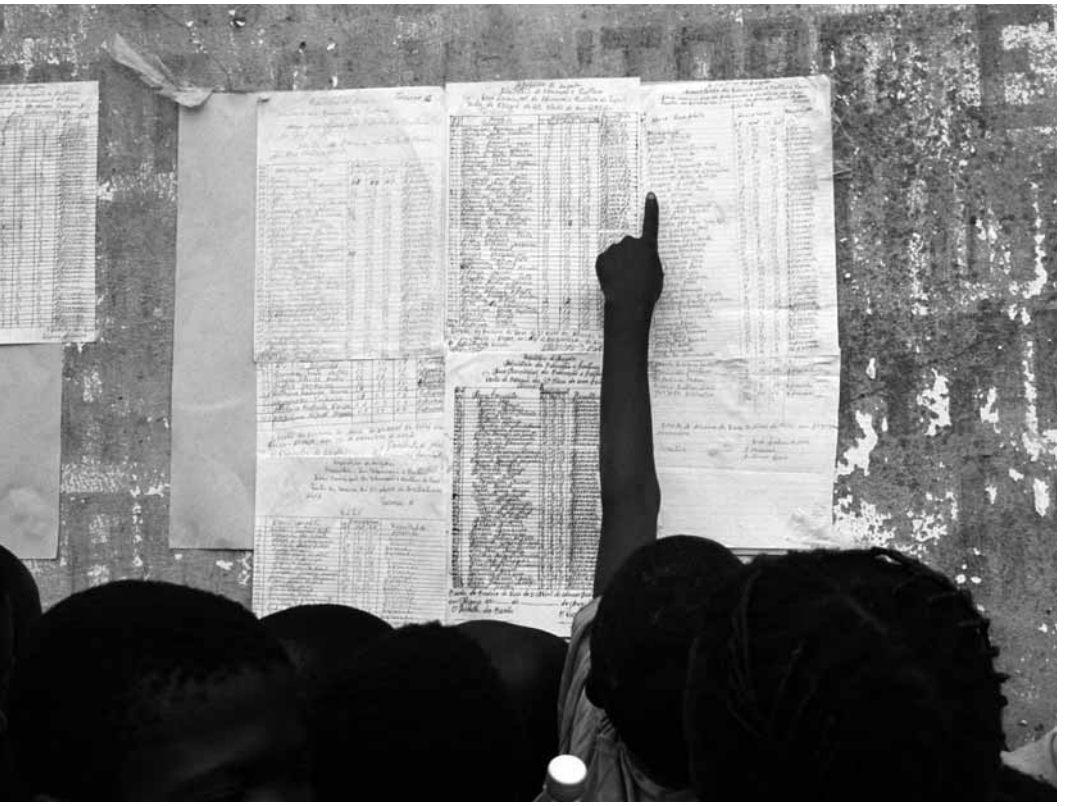
The right of refugee children to education is clearly spelled out in the 1951 *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees,* Article 22: *The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education.* Regarding other types of education, the Contracting States are requested to *accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, access to studies, the recognition of foreign certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships.*

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) provides an important tool for monitoring not only the rights of children generally, but also the special needs of refugee children: *States parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within its jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's... national, ethnic or social origin... or other status* (Article 2).

The Convention lays down the following guidelines: making primary education compulsory and available to all; encouraging the development of diverse forms of secondary education including vocational programmes and making them available and accessible to every child; taking measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need; making higher education available to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means.

Despite the unequivocal standards set up by the law, education programmes do not always find a place in initial emergency responses and they are far

from being a reality in the lives of all children and teenagers who are uprooted from their homes. While granting that safety, shelter, food and clean water are basic necessities, JRS firmly believes that the provision of education must follow very soon after these needs have been met. In this spirit, JRS welcomes the *Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction* which uphold the value of education projects in challenging and difficult circumstances. The standards were published in 2004 thanks to the efforts of the Working Group of the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE), a group of people with wide experience and expertise who gathered together to reflect on and review current practices. These standards are now being further developed and refined with a view to ensuring their implementation and promotion on the ground .



Children looking at their examination results, Negage, Angola ©*Xavier Garcia*

1. Advocacy to promote education

The disparity between the right to education inscribed in refugee law and upheld in the minimum standards on the one hand, and its implementation in the lives of refugees, puts the onus on NGOs and other civil society groups to lobby for improved access to and quality of services. The realisation among JRS workers that field work must be supported by advocacy is in line with a core mandate of the JRS, *defending the cause of refugees*. Accordingly, JRS lobbies at national, regional and international levels, including the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva.

Promoting the right of refugee children to study is a main goal of JRS initiatives in advocacy. The lack of access to education of so many refugee children, particularly at post-primary level, has been taken up by many JRS personnel around the world. Other priorities on the JRS agenda include sustainable, long-term services for refugees and returnees, and where necessary, recognition of educational credentials of refugees. National and international efforts to achieve these ends were outlined by Melanie Teff, Advocacy and Policy coordinator, JRS International, and Anne-Christine Bloch, JRS Representative in Geneva:

Education is inextricably linked to the identification of durable solutions for refugees. Voluntary repatriation will not be sustainable if no educational infrastructure is in place for returnee children. In southern Sudan, JRS works to promote education for returnee children. Concerned about the poor conditions of schools and about low school attendance in Yei district, JRS initiated meetings with the District Commissioner to discuss school conditions and to present him with statistics of children not attending school. As a result, the Commissioner set up inter-agency meetings to work on a plan of action for improving schools, and attendance has since increased. This is an example of the type of local advocacy work conducted by JRS that has a direct impact on children's access to education.

Many refugee children and others who are forcibly displaced have limited access to education, even if there are places available in school, because of the lack of a birth certificate. Many JRS offices have conducted advocacy about this. For example, in the Dominican Republic, JRS was involved in bringing test cases to the courts against the government for refusing birth certificates to children of Haitian descent - in contravention of the Dominican Constitution.

Another difficulty JRS encounters is recognition of educational certificates, granted

while in exile, in the country of origin. This problem arose with recognition by the Burundian government of educational certificates granted to children while they were living in refugee camps in Tanzania. Together with UNICEF and other NGOs, JRS negotiated with the Ministries of Education of Tanzania and Burundi. In 2004 Burundian refugee students in the camps in Tanzania were able to take the same examination as students in Burundi, and the government agreed to recognise their educational certificates from Tanzania.

JRS has also focused on ensuring that schools are a protected environment, and staff have been involved in work on preventing sexual and gender based violence in schools and refugee communities. In one instance, JRS Uganda ran, together with UNHCR, a Child Empowerment Training workshop for 600 pupils and their teachers. This type of awareness-raising work creates an environment in which equal access to education is likely to succeed.

2. Education as a tool for gender equality and protection of women

Another goal of JRS advocacy is to provide equal access to services for people who are marginalised by reason of gender, disability or membership of a minority ethnic or religious group. JRS education initiatives serve as tools for protection of vulnerable people, empowering them and safeguarding their rights. In working to ensure equal opportunities, JRS is especially committed to promoting gender equality through positive discrimination in education for girls and women. This approach is a response to the multiple obstacles and risks encountered by refugee women in diverse settings. It is a cause which has found expression in most JRS education programmes, which directly or indirectly include elements of gender awareness. Examples are literacy and vocational skills projects where women were invited to share the experience of cultural constraints to implementing what they learned at home and in their community.

Lobone, southern Sudan

Challenging traditionally held gender roles is a key strategy of JRS, paving the way for a shift in concepts which view women as unequal in decision-making processes. The JRS peace education team in Lobone, southern Sudan did this in a creative way through role play in leadership workshops for NGO staff. Julius Lapat Okeny and Emer Kerrigan of JRS Lobone say the exercise revealed how all people have different understandings of gender:

Discussion on gender frequently takes place at the request of the participants of the workshop. They express how often gender becomes the centre of discussions on com-

munity development, yet the term can be confusing and needs clarification. In one role-play, two men's groups acted out what life would be like if they woke up in the morning to find no women in Lobone. Both men's groups were similar in their first reactions that they would have more freedom, causing the room to fill with laughter for the first few moments of the discussion. However, with more discussion both men's groups recognised that they would have to adopt the stereotypical women's roles of cooking and cleaning. Acting out these duties in front of the group was very entertaining for all.

The women's group was similarly asked to act out what life would be like if they woke up in the morning and there were no men in Lobone. The women took the task more seriously than the men and went into great discussion. In their drama they revealed that life would not be that different. Through the drama all groups revealed that they already had an understanding of gender. The term gender is commonly feared by men in Lobone who interpret it to mean that women want to take up their jobs as teachers and soldiers. Following the discussion, participants understood that gender balance is rather searching for the sharing of roles.

Lainé, Guinea

Mrs Wubu, a Liberian refugee who worked with JRS in Lainé camp in Guinea, undertakes advocacy for women's rights. She is convinced that women have an indispensable role to play in running the community, one which is often denied them: *Women are the mainstay of their families as well as peace makers during war. They are well able to analyse root causes of tension and they know which power groups in the community are most likely to support peace initiatives. However, women are least among decision makers both at home and in wider society, where they only rarely hold higher posts.*

Development of their potential at all levels should be a priority, and their capacity should be enhanced in areas where their weaknesses are greatest. Education is crucial to empower women: to promote equality, to increase their participation in decision-making, and to reduce violence against them.

The Mrs Wubus of this world play an irreplaceable role in enhancing women's position in society. As she emphasises, it is imperative to have women leaders, not least for the sake of women and girls who often face specific risks living in refugee camps and who may suffer discrimination in the delivery of goods and services. When the camp leadership is composed of men, there is a likelihood that gender-specific problems will not be taken fully into account.

Primary School in Nimule, south Sudan *©Don Doll SJ/JRS*

Chief among the needs of women, and of girls in particular, is protection from abuse and harassment. Security is a major concern: women and girls, who have to walk great distances to obtain water or firewood, or to go to school, face the hazards of rape and assault. The problem assumes more serious proportions if traditional mechanisms for ensuring order in the community have broken down.

3. Enabling girls to access their right to education

Firmly convinced that – in Mrs Wubu's words – *education is crucial to empower women*, JRS invests in projects which will allow girls to enjoy their rightful share of education. The urgent need for equal opportunities is evident in many JRS school programmes where girls are under-represented. Obstacles in the way of girls' education, similar to those affecting women, can be traced back to their traditional role in society, which denies them access to learning opportunities. This in turn increases the risk of poverty and insecurity. Cathy Solano RSM, former project director for JRS Adjumani, says the hindrances facing refugee girls in northern Uganda are as many as they are diverse:

The main one is that parents or relatives simply cannot afford to pay the small amount, from 15 US dollars to 60 US dollars per term. If they can afford the fees, preference is given to boys who are considered more capable academically and a future investment for the family. When parents allow their daughters to go to school, often located at a significant distance from their homes, a number of issues arise, especially of safety and accommodation. Moreover, due to a lack of sanitary materials and underwear for the period of menstruation, girls miss an inordinate number of days every month, so it increasingly difficult for them to catch up on lost class and study time.

Another problem affecting school attendance is the role assigned by many cultures to young girls as "caretakers" of their younger siblings and "mother's helper" to provide water, firewood and food. Says Lolin Menéndez RSCJ: Instead of being children with other children, learning and playing in the security of a school routine, developing their intellectual and physical selves, most often they are at home, bearing responsibilities beyond what their age warrants. This situation is not unique to refugee camps but perhaps there it finds its most poignant expression.

Accordingly, JRS endeavours to meet the needs of school-going girls by addressing the barriers which lie in the way of their education. In Kakuma camp in Kenya, for example, a programme supports girls to attend boarding

schools in the district for the last years of the primary cycle. Staff members say the programme allows girls to study without the constraints of household chores and in some cases serves as a deterrent to early marriages, another impediment in the way of education. In encouraging school attendance, the far-reaching goal of the programme is, in the words of the staff, *to enable some young women to advance their education to a level that will enable them to become future leaders and role models.*

Yei, southern Sudan

In Yei, southern Sudan, the JRS team sought after the right approach to encourage girls to attend the two secondary schools it supports. In 2005, their efforts bore fruit: there was a 10% rise in enrolment of girl students after JRS workers launched their strategy. To facilitate the girls' education, JRS contributed to the payment of school fees and met prospective students to discuss openly the potential obstacles in the way of their tuition. Concerns voiced by the girls typically included harassment by men on the way to and from school, lack of support from their families and domestic work before and after school.

Lobone, southern Sudan

Another JRS-supported secondary school in southern Sudan, which has focused on increasing the number of girls attending, is in Lobone district: The JRS team attributed the problem of poor attendance – *in Senior Four, we have only nine girls registered in the school* – partly to a *general lack of interest* in formal education among girls, so they took to organising weekly meetings for them. One staff member described the rationale behind planning the gatherings: *The aim of this method is to make the girls feel part of a group, to show them that their views are important, and to challenge the notion that a girl must abandon her culture if she is to proceed with education. It is hoped the gatherings will provide a forum in which girls would feel comfortable to talk openly about their challenges.*

This was not the first time attempts had been made to organise meetings with secondary school girls, however previous endeavours proved to be unsuccessful because girls did not attend regularly. A reason behind their low attendance may have been the way the meetings were conducted: JRS staff admitted that earlier meetings tended to be occasions to preach to the girls present about a range of issues, from how they should behave to the fact that early marriage destroyed their opportunities for education.

Learning from mistakes made, the JRS team are conducting the latest round of meetings by making them more participatory, giving girls the responsibility of setting the agenda a week in advance and encouraging them to share their experiences. Say the JRS staff: *It is hoped this will maintain their interest, at least temporarily.*

Certainly not all girls are resigned to missing out on education. Many are eager to overcome the formidable obstacles they face to have the opportunity to attend school regularly. The following appeal sent by a girl to Mike Foley CFX, former project director, JRS Lobone, highlights not only her determination but also the cultural barriers standing in the way of girls' education.

Dear Brother Mike,
I am a Sudanese national. The girl who is earnestly run after studies! I consider this a bold move as this is the second time that I write to you. I am compelled to persistently bother you because of the condition I am in.

Since I am considered a child who cannot reason, I have decided to apply my heart in two things: going to church and going to school, and my mother has been a big support. She says, "your father is dead and I am old and your brothers and sisters are scattered by war. The only thing you should do are going to church and attending school, so that in future your youngest brothers get education through you". So I put my faith in God and education and neglected Dinka tribal activities, which hinder studies.

In the year 2001, people began disturbing me and saying I am a school girl, and besides I am a young girl of 15 years. However, due to the deep rooted cultural practices of our Dinka tribe, they persisted. I reported this to my mother, and she told me that most Dinkas do not support education, especially for girls. She sent me to study in Nimule and live with her sister. I completed Senior One there, and now my aunt has gone to Bor, how sad!

Even if I join school this year, I will not complete. I heard rumours that there are men who have been instructed to abduct me for marriage if I continue my studies.

Please sir, put your heart to my case to let this thing not happen to me, because if I now study then my brothers and sisters will also study but if I do not, then no one will support them. As a girl, I have no other way to help out at home except to study.

If you could assist me even only through this year, maybe in coming years God will give us freedom. And also if I missed this year without studying then this should be the end of my school for good.

Adjumani, northern Uganda

A JRS team in Adjumani and Moyo districts, northern Uganda, has made a commendable effort in promoting gender equality. In 2002, the then JRS secondary education coordinator, Anne Kelly, IBVM, found that girls made up only 20% of enrolment in the four JRS-supported secondary schools. This alarming figure called for action to redress the low attendance and high drop-rates among school-going girls. The Affirmative Action Programme (AAP) for Girls was launched as a pilot project that same year. Three years, later, the rate of enrolment of girls stands at 28% and promotion of gender equity has become a JRS priority for all the education programmes in Adjumani and Moyo districts.

At first the AAP targeted second and third year girls in secondary school, subsidising their school fees. Cathy Solano RSM, former project director in Adjumani, recalled: *Initial results proved so successful that, in 2003, the programme was expanded to include all girl students enrolled in the settlement schools. According to information supplied to JRS staff, this cost-sharing exercise with parents also had the desired effect of drastically reducing the number of drop-outs during 2002.*

AAP promotion activities included special assemblies for girls to further leadership skills and improve academic performance as well as the promotion of girl-child education (GCE). Practical measures like distribution of sanitary cloths, soap, washing basins and underwear to each girl student contributed to encouraging school attendance. In each school, Senior Women Teachers (SWTs) were appointed to raise awareness about hygiene and to promote the programme in the school community. AAP staff tracked girl student attendance rates carefully and followed up cases of drop-outs, pregnancies and early marriages.

As the success of the AAP grew, workshops were held to introduce the GCE programme among head teachers, refugee community leaders, members of the school management committees and parent teacher associations, and student leaders.
In mid-2003, another element, a school feeding programme, was introduced

in the AAP in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP). Sr Solano says the proposal was drawn up to benefit *girls in two secondary schools who were struggling to feed themselves and who spent a large proportion of their time away from classes looking for, or cultivating, food. The proposal received a more than favourable response and the 'feeding programme' was introduced in all of the four schools for both girls and boys*. This initiative led to improved academic performance, as well as to increased enrolment from 2003 to 2004.

Promoting gender equity is now an integral part of JRS education programmes in Adjumani and several strategies have been planned to promote GCE: a pilot programme in mathematics and English for girls in some schools; appointment of SWTs in each of the 32 primary schools; distribution of stationery kits, exercise books and T-shirts to primary girl students as an incentive. Building safe hostels and bathing shelters for girls in schools was identified as another priority.

Says Sr Solano: *Overall, the AAP has been an astounding success. The amazing story of Esther Jurua from Mungula refugee settlement, an area south of Adjumani often the victim of LRA attacks, has also played a major role in promoting the programme. Esther can forever boast of being the first ever girl, Sudanese or Ugandan, to achieve a first division result in the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) examinations of 2003. She equalled the score of the top performing boy in Adjumani district. With the affirmation that girls are just as capable as boys when given the same opportunities, it is expected that more girls, like Esther, will achieve first division results in their final examinations. They will then go on to study at university as well as play a necessary role in determining the directions and policies that Sudan and Uganda can take in the future.*

Osire camp, Namibia

The JRS team in Namibia arrived at an inventive way not only of promoting girls' education but also of diminishing violence against them. This was achieved through the setting up of clubs. Francesca Campolongo, director of JRS in Namibia, said the Osire Girls Club came into being after 25 refugee women carried out a survey in late 2002 to assess the needs of girls in the camp, especially *marginalised minors*. Ms Campolongo said the survey findings showed the way to go: *It was evident that there was a need to assist young people, especially girls, to stay in school and complete their education, to encourage those not in school to come, and to assist young people in making positive life choices*. So a club was established for girls and immediately enjoyed a positive

response: 800 girls turned up for the first meeting.

The Osire Boys' Club followed soon after in response to a need expressed by male teachers to educate boys in non-violent behaviour and respect towards women. Continues Ms Campolongo: *They emphasised that by raising awareness on issues like teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, violence, and conflict resolution, the programme would have an impact on changing the patterns of life in the camp*. Ten mentors were identified and the boys' club started in November 2003 with a workshop on *Violence and other forms of abuse against women and children*. Currently about 2,700 young people aged between 10 and 20 years are members of the clubs.

4. Taking up the pen instead of the gun: preventing child recruitment

Education among refugee children and youth provides a strong element of protection: the prospects and activities of learning offer a constructive alternative to those who may be vulnerable to recruitment, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, prostitution, use of drugs and criminal activity. These pitfalls and dangers are part of the daily reality of young refugees, who often have little say in their life choices or who do not resist because there are no other alternatives in sight.

Education is critically important when it comes to protecting children from recruitment into armed groups, and in healing the wounds of those who were once soldiers. The recruitment of child soldiers is a global scourge. According to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, more than 300,000 child soldiers belong to government armed forces, paramilitary groups or armed opposition groups worldwide. Some are abducted as young as 10 years, however most child soldiers enlist "voluntarily" between the ages of 14 and 18. They are used not only as soldiers, wielding lightweight weapons, but also as spies, messengers, sentries, servants, sex slaves, to lay and clear landmines, and even as human mine detectors. They often end up on the frontline; Salvator, a 16-year-old Burundian who belonged to a militia group, says he took part in several engagements: *I fought in Burundi for a year, on many fronts: in Makamba Province, at Nyanza Lac. Later we went to Tanzania, and to Congo (DRC). We reached Congo in big canoes. We were around 250. I remember many were like me. We were divided into two groups; one for those used to fighting and the other for those with less experience. I was in the first group. Sometimes there were only a few of us in the line of fire. Some were adults and some were children.*

Life is unbelievably tough for child soldiers, who are often maltreated and even killed during harsh training. Continues Salvator: *We woke up very early in the morning; they made us run and they taught us how to move in the forest. Sometimes we began at 2am and didn't finish until 7pm. We ate once a day, at 8am. Our food had no salt - we didn't have the right to it as newcomers. We slept without blankets because we didn't have the right to them. We were lashed many times every day, on the hips and the upper legs. They made us cross the forests running, cross the rivers... They beat those who lagged behind. Three of us died during training.*

Many children are recruited by force, especially in times of war. One example among many of a rebel movement which has forcibly abducted thousands of children is the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda. An estimated 20,000 young boys and girls have been abducted, forced into war and sexual slavery by the LRA in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. In 2003, the JRS Eastern Africa newsletter reported: *In the past number of weeks JRS has witnessed the abduction of 20 orphans from our neighbourhood in Adjumani, northern Uganda. This was followed by the abduction of young girls from Soroti, west Uganda and 12 refugee children from the Adjumani camps.* A perverse tactic often adopted by groups recruiting children is to force them to commit hideous crimes to break them and to command their unthinking obedience. Dieter Scholz SJ, former international director of JRS, recalled listening to the stories of traumatised Mozambican refugees in Zimbabwe, *how their villages were burnt and their crops destroyed, how young boys aged between 12 and 15 were inducted into Renamo by being forced to slaughter one or both of their parents in front of the assembled village community.*

Many armed groups across the world would argue that they do not recruit children by "force"; they insist children join their ranks voluntarily. Desperate circumstances, coupled with the promise of food, security and even education, do prompt thousands of children to sign up. Salvator clearly remembers his reasons for joining: *I was five years old when my parents died. After my parents' death, my uncle took care of me. My aunt didn't like me, though. I was uncomfortable at home. Then I began to think about joining an armed group. A neighbour told me I would have clothes and some money, and that I would be better off. So I decided to join. I was 12 years old.*

Research shows youth who enlist see few alternatives to involvement in the armed conflict raging around them: it is a means of survival for them. Albert

(not his proper name), a Sudanese refugee who was headmaster of a JRS secondary school in Adjumani, said that joining a rebel group often meant you *would get benefits of a sort*, so it was hardly surprising that children joined voluntarily: *If all the people around you are armed, what would you do? If you joined the rebels, you would not be given money, but if you had a gun, you could kill animals for food, you could steal, or you could sell your gun*. Across the world, in northern Sri Lanka, the headmaster of a JRS-supported school in a welfare centre for internally displaced people came to the same conclusion: *Poverty prompts many children to drop out of school and to join pro-government militias. When children – usually aged between 12 and 16 – join these groups, they send them to work here and there so they earn some money.* Displaced children leading a frustrated, aimless existence amid shattered community structures are particularly susceptible to recruitment; the Sri Lankan headmaster said many gravitate towards militias because *they give the children an identity, however false, at the age of 12*.

Many children join armed groups directly motivated by a desire to fight injustice inflicted on them, their families and their communities, or to exact revenge for wrongs suffered. Guerrilla groups often depict their armed struggle as a means to obtain a measure of justice, security or even independence for the oppressed and dispossessed people they claim to represent. A classic tactic is to exploit teenagers' grievances, bombarding them with propaganda which promises restored pride, the possibility of settling scores and 'liberation'. For many armed groups, an ideal location to stage their propaganda is the school, which thus becomes a place of risk in times of war. Jorge Serrano SJ, who worked with JRS for several years, said sometimes JRS teams have had to negotiate with recruiters: *A group of young people gathered in one compound becomes an easy target for recruitment. Such has been the case, for example, in southern Sudan, where JRS personnel have pleaded with SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army) authorities in times of kasha (conscription) to spare students and teachers, possible leaders in the near future, from conscription and to allow them to continue their studies.*

Recruitment comes into direct confrontation with education here, often dealing a doubly heavy blow by taking both teachers and children. In the mind of the Sudanese headmaster, Mr Albert, constant recruitment drives could generate a cycle which promises to inflict severe damage on schools: *Forcibly recruiting teachers clearly reduces standards of education and this means children will not be encouraged to attend school, so they could go anywhere, do anything.*

And often what children will do is precisely to join the militant movement which controls the area.

There is little doubt that recruitment of child soldiers poses urgent and wide-ranging challenges to education services for refugees and internally displaced people. Chief among them is countering the reality that bringing children and youth together for education makes them an easy target for persuasion and recruitment by outsiders with politically-motivated concerns and perhaps even by teachers themselves. Another key challenge is the necessity of quality teaching to draw children to school so they will not be lured into joining armed groups. JRS takes up these challenges every day across the world and many people, like the regional director of the Asia Pacific projects, Andre Sugijopranoto SJ, feel education programmes do serve as an effective prevention tool:

The programme in Mae Hong Son on the Thai-Burma border started in 1997 with teacher-training. This is one programme where we really see that education is a tool for protection. Karenni refugees themselves acknowledge that because education programmes exist, the number of child soldiers has decreased. This happens in the Moluccas in Indonesia too, where both Christian and Muslim factions recruit children to fight. JRS takes care of Muslim and Christian children to prevent recruitment through vocational training and scholarships for those who want to go to local schools.

For children who served time as soldiers and who eventually left, educators need to address the psychosocial and even physical wounds they suffer from. The rehabilitation of child soldiers and their reintegration into society calls for skilled and sensitive intervention. Says Roxanne Schares SSND, education resource person for Africa: *Tortured and made to torture or to take part in terrible atrocities against others, even their own families and friends, child soldiers are traumatised, stigmatised, lacking self-esteem, uncertain of the community's reaction toward them, and unable to return home.* Despite the trauma suffered, there is a way forward. Continues Sr Schares: *Former child soldiers, who usually require special care, rehabilitation and education, can be restored to health and to their families and communities.*

Cambodia

The story of a Cambodian man who today works at *Banteay Prieb* (wich means *Centre of the Dove*)– a Jesuit Service vocational skills centre for landmine sur-

Banteay Prieb, Cambodia

vivors just outside Phnom Penh – reveals how the fortunes of former child soldiers can be reversed through holistic rehabilitation. Beyond learning a skill in *Banteay Prieb*, this man learned how to "be with" people in a healing environment.

In 1983, during the communist regime in Cambodia, the army used to recruit children from schools, regardless of their age. I was 15 years old when soldiers came to our school compound. I thought they were going to take the older students. I started running but they caught me, put me in a truck and carried me to the district office. We were locked up. After two days, my parents got to know I had been taken and they came to visit me. They were only allowed to speak to me from behind a grid. This was in 1983. I was very short, and not strong enough to carry my rifle, a long Japanese model, so I dragged it along.

When I was young, I did not have the concept of right and wrong that I do now. Everything people told me prompted me to be aggressive and I grew up as a violent person. There was no space to think any differently. If I was told someone was my enemy, then he was my true enemy. We were taught: 'You are strong and brave, you have to do this', and if we did not do it, it meant we were not strong enough. When a friend of mine escaped from the military camp, I was ordered to bring him back. I went out to search and saw him; however I pitied him and let him go. When I arrived back at the camp, they shaved my hair off and locked me in a cage for three days. I cried and I wanted to die. We had no option: we had to follow orders.

I was in the army for six years, until I stepped on a landmine. The wounds from such an experience remain forever. However, with JRS, I saw I could learn how to live in a community, how to respect people. I learned a skill, I studied and in 1997, I became the assistant director of the wheelchairs workshop at the JRS centre. Now I am married and I have three children. I feel I am lucky, I never believed my life could be so joyful.

Osire Camp, Namibia

Education encourages children and youth who were once warriors to start life anew, to put their past behind them and to make up for what they see as "lost time". Those who attend school benefit from the "normal" daily routine and regime of discipline, and from being in an environment where children can be children.

Many education projects count former child soldiers among learners. The

Junior Secondary School in Osire camp in Namibia is one such project. The JRS staff and teachers wanted to find out more about what children who had been soldiers passed through. Francesca Campolongo describes what they discovered:

It's the start of summer in Namibia. In few weeks time about 180 students are going to sit for their grade 10 national exams. The students at the Junior Secondary School in Osire refugee camp are filled with hope and fear. But they are also excited by the prospect of being the first refugee students to graduate from a school that just three years ago seemed like a distant dream.

In many ways, it's a normal school. Attentive teachers, strict school principal and vice-principal, ever present masters of discipline, kids roaming around the school compound during break time in their red or turquoise uniforms, copy-machine breaking down during exam time, soccer teams winning all the competitions.

However, the school's background is far from normal, not least because about 84 pupils served as child soldiers in southern Angola. Most of them are in grade 10 this year. When we asked the vice-principal if they were good students, he replied, 'They certainly are if they're in grade 10, otherwise they would be repeating grade 9'.

Most of the students from Angola fled their country alone, some have families still in Angola, but most child soldiers have lost contact with their relatives. The school becomes a useful tool to recreate normality. Rules to respect, assignments to accomplish, tasks to fulfil, responsibilities and rewards become part of a long road to regain the time lost during the fighting.

We tried to talk to the former soldiers. We sat with a group of five students, two girls and three boys. We started chatting, trying to get them to talk to us about their past. The reaction was surprising. Probably fearing that we would punish them or worse, they all denied very firmly being former child soldiers. They told stories where every year of their childhood was accounted for, with exact references to places where they lived and schools attended. None of it matched the information we had. So we decided, together with the staff of the school, to try a different route. A teacher asked them to write down their stories and the truth came out.

'After my training I was forced to fight against my brothers. We were told that the aim of the war was to take out Cuban troops from the country'... 'Sometimes I feel frustrated when I think about the time I have lost during that bad period of my

life'... 'I was 12 years old'... 'They captured me when I was going up to grade 4'... 'That spirit of being a soldier has gone. Sometimes I feel just a bit worried when I imagine I was fighting again'... 'I feel good because yesterday was and today is'.

These quotes from former child soldiers are a mixture of memories, regrets for lost time, hopes, broken childhood, strong will and determination, every single story ends with the hope of being able to continue studying. As time goes on, this hope replaces the fear of the past; it provides students with a sense of normality. Education means giving them hope for the future.

Salala and Monserrado settlements, Liberia

JRS personnel working among internally displaced people in Liberia told a similar story about accompanying former child soldiers on the road to recovery by offering education, skills and a 'normal' environment. JRS returned to Liberia in 2002 in the aftermath of civil war to set up services – with an emphasis on education – in highly insecure surroundings. A transitional government was in place, disarmament was under way and rebel activity remained largely unchecked in many parts of the country. C.Amalraj SJ, former director of JRS Liberia, said that amid the instability, *former child soldiers learned how to be normal again* in schools catering for thousands of children in the camps of Salala and Monserrado just outside Monrovia. *Hundreds of children who were abducted by various militia groups came back, some openly, some incognito. Some of these students were recognised by their teachers, who once bore the brunt of militia violence.*

JRS developed projects to help children who had been coerced into war, offering skills development and income generation programmes as well as schooling. Many former child soldiers who enlisted in JRS training programmes admitted they had fought for rebels who, they said, were "not human beings". When asked why he chose carpentry, one such teenager, Moses, said: *The JRS people did not ask too many questions about my past.* For Fr Amalraj, the education activities served a purpose beyond imparting knowledge and skills. *All these activities created hope. JRS schools and the training centres were therapeutic centres where people could go and tell their stories and seek fellowship with other young people who had gone through the same hell.*

In mid-2003, rebel attacks in the area of the camps for displaced people forced the suspension of JRS work, wreaking a "devastating" impact on the education project, which had not gone beyond the school construction phase.

Despite the violence, JRS took up projects again and established primary education for young students up to 16 years old. In such an unpredictable post-war context, education served not only to care for children who were once soldiers, but also to protect those who would be tempted to take up arms with rebel forces to make headway in their lawless surroundings. *The Liberia project protected 15,000 children from inactivity in a volatile situation*, said Mateo Aguirre SJ, regional director of JRS in West Africa.

To fulfil the crucial role of protecting children, JRS workers had to rise to the challenge of providing quality education within a shattered infrastructure and a traumatised community. Internally displaced people in Liberia, in common with millions of other uprooted people who do not leave their country, were somewhat neglected by their government and by international authorities. Says Fr Aguirre: *We feel internally displaced people are abandoned to their plight much more. In Liberia, we saw a response from teachers and some structures in place: school buildings were there, although destroyed. The problem was low motivation due to a lack of school materials. Many teachers felt helpless and disoriented. When there is a war, governments do not feel education is a priority, first because they do not have the means to respond, and also because sometimes settlements of internally displaced people are considered ideologically oriented.*

The lack of official services makes the contribution of humanitarian organisations all the more vital. The JRS experience in post-war Liberia reveals how essential – and at the same time demanding – provision of education is to protect children from a life of violence.

Barrancabermeja and Tierralta, Colombia

The JRS team in Colombia faces the same task of catering for internally displaced people in a zone of continuing civil war. The projects in Barrancabermeja and Tierralta have been designed specifically to prevent displaced children and youth from being recruited into armed groups. To achieve its stated aim, JRS works with local teachers and women community leaders.

Activities targeting youth are all-important in Colombia, where more than 50% of displaced people are under 18. Former director of JRS Colombia, Jorge Serrano SJ, says life is tough for young displaced people in a country torn apart by war. *Life for young people is especially hard in rural areas where there are no opportunities to go to school, to watch television, to go to a dance or to play soccer or basketball. From childhood, internally displaced people must work hard, to*

walk, for instance, 5km to fetch water every day; they have to herd pigs, to collect brushwood for cooking, and to harvest corn or rice. Some went to school for three or four years, but they may have had to stay in the same class throughout because there were no teachers for other levels.

JRS teams try to meet the needs and aspirations of young people on different fronts, including by helping them to identify work opportunities in their new surroundings. In 2000, in Barrancabermeja, JRS joined four agencies in implementing a skills programme to train young men and women in mechanics. In 2001, a joint programme with the parish and the local Red Cross helped young men and women in Tierralta through workshops, income generating activities and facilitated access to college.
Another significant initiative arises out of the JRS Colombia mission to empower displaced people to speak out for their rights: a programme has been under way in seven schools since 2001 involving teachers, parents and 300 young people from the ages of 8 to 18. *JRS attempts to create an environment in which young people can experience a normal youth. We aim to help parents and teachers to become 'resilience tutors' to offer young people the tools to respond to the challenges of living in poverty, which denies them their human rights.*

In promoting awareness among children and youth of their human rights, the programme aims to enable them to confront those groups and systems which deny them these rights. The personnel of JRS Colombia pay close attention to nurturing this perspective in all aspects of their programmes.

Says Fr Serrano: *Listening to what younger people say is a prime component of every JRS programme in Colombia. It is a policy of JRS to work openly among internally displaced people, with adults, young people and children all being invited to take part in decision-making processes, to exercise the right to have their say. It's a hard task because older leaders believe that only men have the right to speak.*

Empowering people is "not a quick fix solution"; rather it is a long-term process which aims to bring about fundamental changes in attitudes. If successful, its far-reaching impact promises to reinforce the capability of young people to withstand the lure of joining an armed group, and to become agents of change in their communities. In Fr Serrano's words: *Educated young men would eventually be able to make a valuable contribution to rebuilding the country through the pen, not the gun.*

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Meeting child soldiers, whose lives were badly damaged, sometimes ruined beyond repair, by destructive forces beyond their control made JRS workers sharply aware of the need to act to prevent recruitment. *JRS was witnessing daily, in so many parts of the world, the recruitment of refugee children out of camps, the suffering of these same youngsters and their families. When they came back from the battle field, they were often deeply traumatised and emotionally shattered. They faced many difficulties reintegrating into their societies, and many childhoods and future perspectives were lost,* said Elizabeth Janz-Mayer Reich, former JRS representative in Geneva.

The response of JRS to the gross violation of children's rights took shape in collaboration to set up the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. The coalition was founded in May 1998 by a core group of people who were moved by the testimony of a Ugandan woman, Angelina Acheng Atyam, whose daughter was abducted by the LRA. *Six NGOs, including JRS, decided to push Angelina's concerns forward,* says Amaya Valcárcel, former policy officer for JRS International. *They succeeded in weaving together a network of new alliances between individuals, non-governmental organisations and governments to exert pressure on rebel and resistance movements as well as governments that continue to use children in their armies.*

Today the coalition is a worldwide movement with branches in many countries. JRS has supported action taken at local level in several countries. In South Kivu, DRC, JRS supported the production of a film on child soldiers with the practical aim of pushing the demobilisation process ahead. This film, produced in October 2003, was shot in a Mai-Mai rebel camp. *The raw images of children - sometimes very young - proudly displaying themselves as soldiers in front of the cameras, brings the issue directly to the viewer, said Ms Valcárcel. It portrays a sense of devastation, of how children, manipulated in deadly political power struggles, may ruin the future of a country.*

The development of the campaign illustrates the vital role played by civil society, especially at grassroots level. Says Ms Valcárcel: *Priority needs to be given to strengthening civil society, especially local human rights and communications organisations and to supporting local communities which are concerned about human dignity, churches, village organisations, women's movements and co-operative associations. With better monitoring and reporting on the conduct of armed groups, we can ensure that no child is left behind with fighting forces.*

More than we can imagine

Experience and conviction teach us that apart from safeguarding groups particularly at risk, like women and teenagers, education set-ups offer a safe haven for the whole community amid the chaos of conflict and displacement. Indeed, our educational initiatives have the potential to achieve more than we could hope or even imagine, in healing trauma, restoring self-confidence and rebuilding relationships.

Rwandan child soldier

Chapter Seven

A way of proceeding

Moving towards best practice in the light of our mission

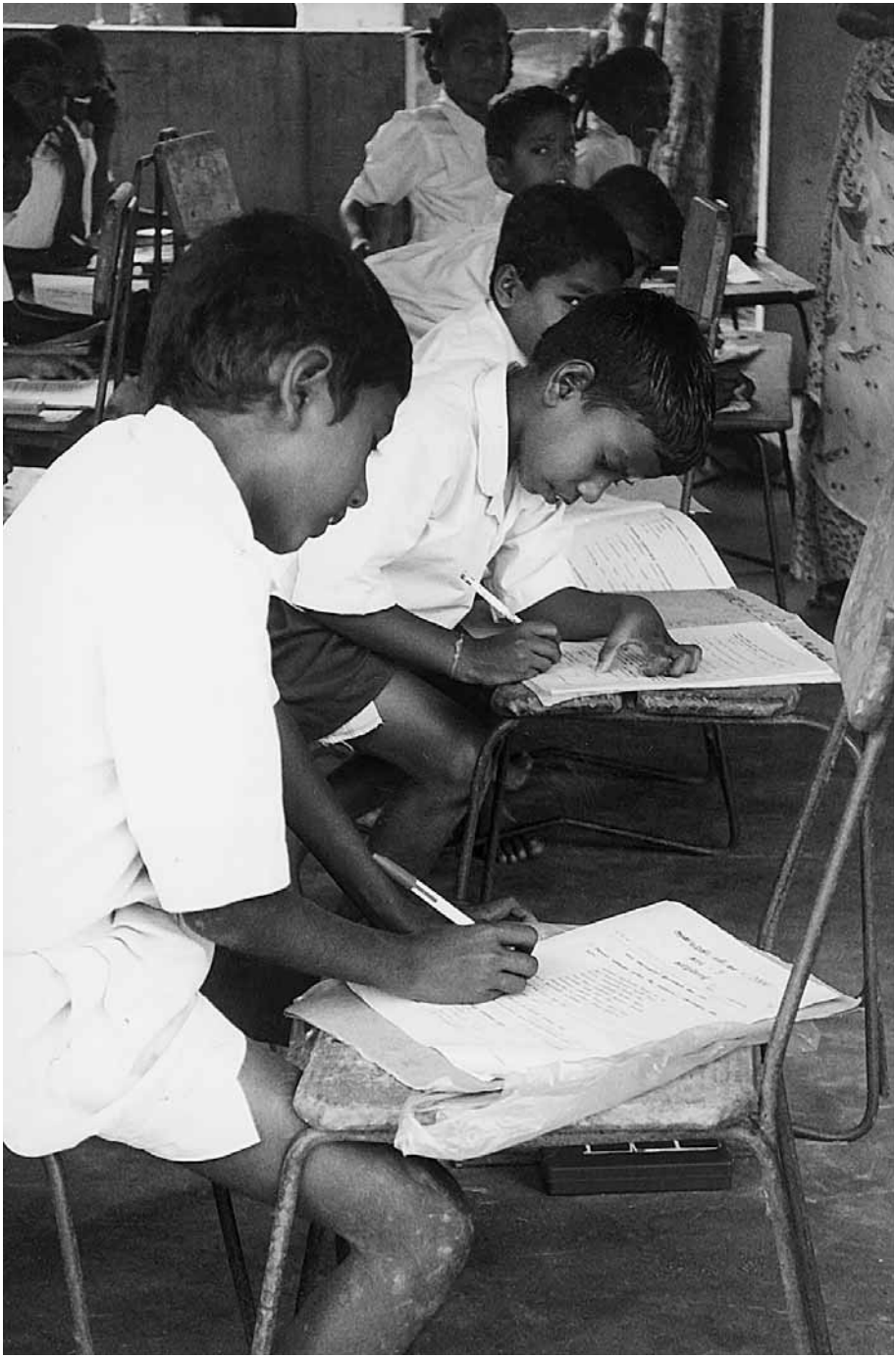
Authentic dialogue starts the moment someone shows confidence in the power of growth latent in each person, in the capacity to exercise freedom and act responsibly. This is the place where the other receives freedom to be him or herself, and is encouraged to express doubts, sadness, hope and dreams."
François Chanterie SJ

Service among refugees and displaced people necessarily calls for a dynamic cycle of assessment, discernment and planning as a framework for action. The demands and dilemmas encountered are basically the same as those found in providing education to other marginalized groups. They are, however, exacerbated by the reality of displacement. JRS educators, together with colleagues from other organizations, face these challenges daily in different settings across the world. Often, the needs at hand demand a response which cannot be found in a manual. How to progress then? The gradual emergence of a way of proceeding may be discerned as JRS workers follow the characteristic social action cycle: "see, judge and act". Mark Raper SJ, the former director of JRS International wrote: *This action brings us back to a point at which we can see, discern and plan, but in a fresh light, from a new perspective* with all we have learned from our experience and personal contact with those who we serve.

To reach the "better" decision in the circumstances, JRS teams turn to criteria inherent in the spirit of the organization, chiefly arising out of the mandate to accompany, serve and defend the cause of refugees. Certain principles are rooted in the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola as the Jesuit heritage. One such principle is a priority to *serve those most in need or in ways which other can not or do not*. Ignatius himself lived this out concretely. He unceasingly sought to promote the more universal, attending to more urgent needs and being at the service of the neediest people. Hence, JRS gives priority to education because it is an often neglected need and implements its preferential option for vulnerable groups in doing so.

Our work with refugees calls for discernment because there are so many "grey" areas. *In such situations, it is not easy to know what to do. Do we move on,*

Students from Sri Lanka in Tamilnadu, India ©*Amaya Valcarcel/JRS*



remain, do we take up a project or not? said the director of JRS International, Lluís Magriñà SJ. *There is no easy answer to these questions precisely because there are so many possible answers, so we need to discern to see our call as JRS and the needs of the people, especially those who are forgotten.* As the mission is shared, discernment is also community-based. Therein lies another characteristic of our way of working: we come together as *friends in the Lord* to seek his will and to serve him. This spirit of companionship is extended to the refugees who are partners in our projects and whose journey in exile we share.

1. A pastoral dimension

Fr Raper says our role includes *services that are specifically pastoral and the pastoral dimension of all we do.* Offering education as a means of hope to all is a pastoral work which calls for a far-reaching approach, described by JRS education resource person for Africa, Roxanne Schares SSND as follows: *Where education empowers, fosters human values and focuses on the development of the total person, it can bring awareness of the wider world and human rights. It is not only about 'learning to know' or having information on particular topics, but also about 'learning to do' with necessary skills, 'learning to be' based on a set of core values necessary for life, and 'learning to live and work with others' to envision and create a hope-filled future.*

Bukavu camps, DRC

A pastoral approach extends educational services to being with refugees, listening to them, building equal relationships, encouraging reconciliation, and even criticizing them. The last may seem surprising and yet it could well be one of the most valuable services we bring to refugees, who may have lost their sense of proportion and even of reality in their restricted environment. Only someone who enjoys the trust and respect of refugees could take on this role, as the experience of Joaquím Pons SJ in the Bukavu camps in DRC reveals:

In many cases, our education work consisted in confronting refugees and challenging their perception of themselves as eternally innocent victims. We tried to enlarge their minds towards a wider horizon of reality. Even if this sounds paradoxical, we felt that part of our service to refugees was to question them, whenever the situation demanded it. In the camps there was an atmosphere where the ideas and their interpretations were easily manipulated. Only someone who had won the trust of refugees could offer some objectivity and put into question the manipulated version of facts.

We were conscious that there was moral ambiguity in the camps, so by being aware of this fact a person could work in the best interests of refugees, without being manipulated by the vested interests of politicians or of the military.

As time went on we witnessed how grateful the refugees were for our way of proceeding. Froduald Mugemanyi, one of our refugee colleagues, recognized the impact that the discreet and persevering manner of working of JRS had on him. It is the witness given by this way of doing and of being with them that that the refugees truly appreciated. 'You are present in the camp in a different way.' This acknowledgement on their part confirmed us in our way of living and of being with the refugees.

The JRS team in Bukavu would meet regularly for reflection and analysis of the situation in the camps and their role therein. The writings of their discernment provide a rich source of inspiration for those seeking to implement the JRS mandate.
One of the main objectives of the Bukavu team was to meet educational needs, a goal which reflected the desire voiced by many of the refugees. Brice Adanhounme and Mateo Aguirre SJ recall that *since this young population was marked by war, anguish and trauma, JRS decided that schools should be a space for hope and rebuilding what is human*. Education was offered as a multi-disciplinary approach which sought to address the multiple needs of a broken people and to rebuild their human dignity.

In the aftermath of the horrendous genocide (1994 in Rwanda), the two main border cities of Goma and Bukavu, in eastern DRC, quickly became inundated with a desperate mass of human beings. It was shortly after this exodus, in Bukavu, when JRS Grands Lacs was established. It was faced with the desire to meet the educational needs of this refugee population and to ensure that some sense of normalcy returned to their lives as soon as possible.

The role of teachers in assisting the community to deal with trauma was crucial. Together with Caritas Bukavu and a Canadian NGO, the IFHIM, (Institut de Formation Humaine Intégrée de Montreal) JRS sought to respond to the psychological trauma experienced by teachers in the camps. They identified a desperate need not only to open schools, but also to accompany and provide pedagogical support for those responsible for education. This marked the origins and identity of JRS projects in the region.

Despite the insecurity, JRS continued to develop its teacher training projects and to organise workshops in six camps in Bukavu. As psychosocial support to the teach-

ers began, JRS was also called on to assist Rwandan priests and religious amongst the refugee population to resume their pastoral activities among a population in dire circumstances.

In December 1995, the situation deteriorated. JRS Grands Lacs began to intensify its activities in the region. Despite the palpable tension in the camps, the decision to stay paid off. The increased provision by JRS of recreational activities, teacher-training workshops and pastoral and material assistance, in particular to street children orphaned by the genocide and inter-ethnic families, encouraged confidence among the refugees.

Besides the project for healing of trauma, JRS was responsible for the coordination of educational activities in six camps managed by Caritas. Through a multidisciplinary team, JRS followed different aspects of the project: pedagogical, religious, extra-curricula activities and logistics. The project covered over 11,000 students in primary school and 5,000 in secondary school, as well as training for 1,100 teachers.

A difficult challenge was to accept the order from the Zairean authorities to close all the schools in the camps. Project directors and teachers were very courageous since they continued serving the students, despite the difficult camp conditions. They managed to offer children a normal and structured life, with all sorts of activities which prevented them from ending up in idleness or violence.

2. Shaping "best practices"

JRS is a relatively young organisation marking its 25th anniversary this year. The beginnings of JRS were marked by enthusiasm and determination among members to work with refugees within a very flexible set-up. As the years passed, the need increased for guidelines and structures to give better direction to the fervour and dedication of JRS teams.

This continued evolution is reflected in the specific field of education. Over the years, project evaluation and reflection by JRS workers – analyzing projects, learning from mistakes, seeing what worked and why – have served to identify better ways of working. This course of action has consisted not only of sharing within JRS projects themselves; it has been considerably enriched through the sharing of "best practices" with other organisations. Some criteria gradually emerged as fundamental for JRS and at the same times, the need was felt to bring together the collective experience of JRS projects for the benefit of improved practice.

Primary class in Yei, south Sudan

JRS Africa Education project: Maximizing resources through a continental approach

A significant step in the development of the JRS education sector was the move towards a continental strategy which responded to these requirements. This wider approach became a reality with the creation of the JRS Africa Education project, which has served to foster a shared way of working, with the drawing up of guidelines and the identification of essential criteria for projects.
Another positive outcome was the setting up of a resource base to collect material – the fruit of years of experience – and to place it at the disposal of other JRS educators. Lolín Menéndez RSCJ, who set up the JRS Africa education project, said the idea to set up a library in Africa as a gathering place for *collective wisdom* dated back to the late eighties. She recalls: *The idea was taken up as a point for action at the JRS Directors' Meeting in Kigali in 1995. JRS acted soon afterwards on the recommendation that the collection of resources begin immediately and the selection of a place to house them be carried out as soon as possible. JRS has always valued the fact that much has been developed with respect to curriculum development and teacher-training in projects for refugee education. However, this wealth of experience was not readily accessible to field workers, so time and energy was wasted searching for and collecting materials. This was true in all continents.*

The Resource Base for Refugee Education (RBRE) was set up in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1997 as part of the Africa Education project. Welcomed by some JRS workers as a *dream come true,* the centre is at the service of JRS field personnel and of colleagues from other agencies and churches, and it has been described as *probably the world's only resource centre for education in emergencies, with material specifically related to populations in crisis.* (Susan Nicolai, Carl Triplehorn, *The Role of Education in Protecting Children in Conflict*. 2003: ODI - Humanitarian Practice Network, p.16).

There are more than 5,000 volumes in the centre, consisting of a variety of resources: accumulated experiences, recommendations, reports, good practices, initiatives, materials found useful, photographs, samples of learning kits and materials. Says Sr Menéndez: *Material has been gathered through interaction with field personnel, who bring new resources generated in the projects or who indicate other valuable materials. There is considerable two-way traffic in the RBRE. The RBRE does not seek to offer ready-made solutions to a project. There is available, however, a range of materials from which field personnel can choose to design a programme or to build up a library that meets the specific needs of the particular project.*

The resource base is not just a place: a full-time *resource person* is at the service of education projects in Africa, offering assistance in evaluation and planning, as well as suggestions about relevant materials available in the RBRE. The JRS Africa education project has also organized workshops at continental level, bringing together field workers from projects with the same scope or working on a particular aspect or level of education.

Another outcome of the JRS Africa Education project has been the drawing up of Education Guidelines (see Annex 2). The guidelines are based, says Sr Menéndez, on *the spirit, vision and mission of JRS as lived concretely in educational policy and practice* and they were developed to meet the desire expressed by JRS personnel *to put in writing what they consider not just important but essential elements of a JRS education project.* First drafted in a preliminary meeting in 1996, the guidelines place educational ministry in the wider framework of the JRS mandate and offer approaches for implementation, *without seeking to become a blueprint for action.* The guidelines have been revised several times by education personnel during continental workshops.

Questions as a framework for action and reflection

One way of developing a project in line with our stated principles and aims is to pose questions to verify that plans do indeed meet essential criteria. The JRS Africa education project drew up a 'standard' set of checkpoints:

- *How are the refugees involved in the design and implementation of the project?*
- *What is the training component of the project, so that JRS can eventually withdraw or hand over the project to the refugees or to others?*
- *How will the project be evaluated or monitored?*
- *Does the project address the question of gender imbalance?*
- *Does it include activities to develop skills in peace building and conflict resolution, and for responsible care of the environment?*
- *Are the root causes of the problem that has caused the refugees to flee being touched?*
- *Are alternative ways of dealing with conflict being offered to the refugees involved in the project?*
- *What is the impact of the project on the local population and on the environment?*
- *How does this project collaborate with the local church, the host country, other NGOs in the area?*

3. Resolving dilemmas

The development of resources and guidelines has been crucial to offer direction to JRS teams in their discernment about the setting up, duration and closure of projects. More often than not, the issues at stake are not clear-cut and at times, tough decisions must be taken. Many predicaments faced are common: while reflecting on education projects for Sudanese refugees, the former regional director for Eastern Africa, Stephen Power SJ asked questions which echoed familiar dilemmas: *In the face of scarce employment opportunities, are projects creating a dependency on our support? Are they sustainable? Have we educated people to emigrate? Is it right to start new projects somewhere else and not to meet the needs of the population where we are working? These are some of the many questions for which there are no hard and fast answers but only guidelines for each situation*. Implementing projects in the unstable world of refugees is bound to be a process beset by problems and difficult choices. Principles and guidelines offer direction however JRS workers in each project must struggle to find a way ahead to provide the best education service possible to fit the needs – in a way unique – of the refugees they serve.

Osire, Namibia

A vivid description of problems encountered is found in the account of a teacher from the junior secondary school in Osire camp in Namibia. The teacher – who wishes to remain anonymous – listed points of concern faced by school staff in the first three years of operations. Chief among them was the reality that *learners were at different levels*: there were *over age students*, some who had resumed education after a long lapse of time, and others who had *no scholarly background* at all.

Some learners were obliged to interrupt their education for five, six, even 10 years, due to war in their country of origin, only to resume it after some time had gone by. Hence, they turned down the option of joining literacy classes, and skipped some grades. The level of knowledge, however, was incomplete, and they found themselves with others who went through education gradually. This situation constituted a big challenge for teachers to fill up the gap and harmonize a given class.

The school accommodates over aged students learners including some who are married, pastors, block leaders, businessmen and drivers. Teachers found it challenging to control mature and over aged learners.
Other learners came from situations where school had been inaccessible, or from parents who had not gone to school themselves and did not value education, or had

been kept from school due to cultural traditions (especially girls). This often resulted in lack of concentration in and outside the classroom, and in many absences.

Another difficulty was the use of English as a medium of instruction for the refugees, who were Portuguese and French speakers. *As the school followed the curriculum of Junior Secondary Schools for Namibia, English was used as the means of instruction. This caused many problems... In time, both learners and teachers became more confident and competent with the use of English.*

The limited availability of qualified personnel was another challenge which loomed large, especially when, the teacher explained, staff numbers dwindled for diverse reasons. *Cases of spontaneous repatriation of some teachers, and resignation of others, disturbed our activities because it was not easy to fill the gap since very few qualified people can be found among the refugees in the camp.*

Initially, the staff faced a pressing problem of a different sort: a high number of teenage pregnancies. The teacher attributed this to two factors: students who attended school outside the camp under sponsorship schemes and who took advantage of refugee girls at school in the camp, and teachers and other adults *with money, like businessmen*, who got involved with girls at secondary school level. *However such cases,* continues the teacher, *have decreased.*

Religious constraints were another issue: *Learners belonging to one church were not allowed to stay in class on Fridays after sunset. These learners constituted a large percentage of the student population. The school compromised by adjusting the Friday timetable, shortening the periods to respond to their needs.*

The teacher does not only share the school's problems, he only sums up – with pride – the achievements accomplished in the short space of three years. *Many workshops for the teachers have been organized, enhancing the appetite for teaching and learning in both teachers and learners. Teachers who failed to comply with the code of conduct have been identified and corrected when appropriate. School materials have been provided in sufficient quantity, which enabled learners to work well until the end of the school year. Both refugees and teachers are given a certificate by JRS which can help them when going back to Angola.* Last, but certainly not least, came glowing reports of the performance of school teams: *A school choir, soccer teams, and volley ball teams have been set up: the Osire junior secondary school won all the matches played against Namibian schools.*

The lessons learned by the Osire school are a concrete example of how education projects can and do thrive despite the many dilemmas and difficulties faced along the way. It is through identifying and addressing the challenges at hand that individual projects make an invaluable contribution to the ongoing search for *better*, perhaps even *best* practices.

4. Accompanying on repatriation: until when is JRS needed?

One choice facing all JRS teams sooner or later is how far to accompany refugees. Until when is JRS needed in a given situation? These questions assume a particular relevance when refugee communities are set to repatriate. Reflecting about the role played by JRS in accompanying returnees, Jenny Cafiso, former programmes officer, JRS International, summed up the dilemma: *A question we had to discern many times was when does a refugee situation stop being a refugee situation, and when can JRS go?*

The answer clearly depends on the context, however the principles underlying provision of education give pointers for discernment and action in tackling what could be a thorny dilemma. Briefly, education, in common with other JRS initiatives, aims to give refugees hope during exile and to help them to prepare for the future, an objective achieved largely by enabling them to rebuild and regain control of their disrupted lives and communities.
Hence, JRS personnel draw up 'exit strategies' with these wider aims in mind, and when the time comes for refugees to return, JRS teams assess how far – if at all – they will accompany refugees on the road home.

All the same, Ms Cafiso says JRS experience reveals that *the options are never that clear or simple*. What is clear is that most refugees long to go home and that they will almost certainly need extensive support to re-establish themselves. They go back to an already poor country, which has been further ravaged by war, with limited resources and support. Continues Ms Cafiso: *Return is the preferred option, yet refugees are often reluctant to go back to their own country unless they are sure it is safe to do so and that the basic requirements for living are there, such as land, a place to live, and school for the children*. Hence, in some cases, JRS teams choose to accompany refugees home and to stay for some time to help them rebuild their lives.

The transition between exile and resettling in one's country could be seen as a *bridge* between preparation in exile for a better future and actually making the hoped-for *future* a reality back home.

Angola

An additional factor urging JRS teams to follow returnees to their country of origin is the presence of JRS colleagues working among internally displaced people there. One recent example of such a scenario is Angola. After many years accompanying the Angolan refugees in Zambia and Namibia as well as internally displaced people in Angola, JRS entered into a different phase of activities when the peace accord was signed in 2002 and refugees began to return home. Joanne Whitaker RSM, regional director for JRS Southern Africa, says all projects have now become focused on support of the reintegration and rehabilitation of returnees, with a special focus on formal and informal education.

In Angola, the infrastructure was destroyed during the war. Our approach is to reinstate primary education in the region where we are at work through teacher-training and some school rehabilitation, also providing school material. A background for all this is to work with the local community, the local authorities and the churches with the idea of turning things over to them when JRS departs. Our work with the local church has been to identify possible religious congregations who would like to get involved in the work. JRS has tried not to pay teachers' salaries so that the government takes on this responsibility. School rehabilitation has been done with community participation. JRS provides supplies from Zambia or Luena (in Angola) itself and people build the schools.

It has been necessary to provide language formation in Portuguese language for children and for those enrolled in programmes for adult literacy, since the language of instruction is Portuguese and due to years in exile many refugees are not fluent in the language. In order to facilitate access to services, JRS provides this programme.

Another component of the presence of JRS in Angola is the provision of peace education and conflict resolution programmes for the wider community. The idea is to train teachers, pastors and community leaders who can act as animators.

It is worth pointing out that the project director in Luau is an ex-child soldier who was a teacher in Osire junior secondary school, run by JRS in Namibia. A woman who is the project director in Luena was also a teacher in this school. The education coordinator used to be a teacher in a small camp in Namibia. He knows all the local languages and this facilitates the task a lot.

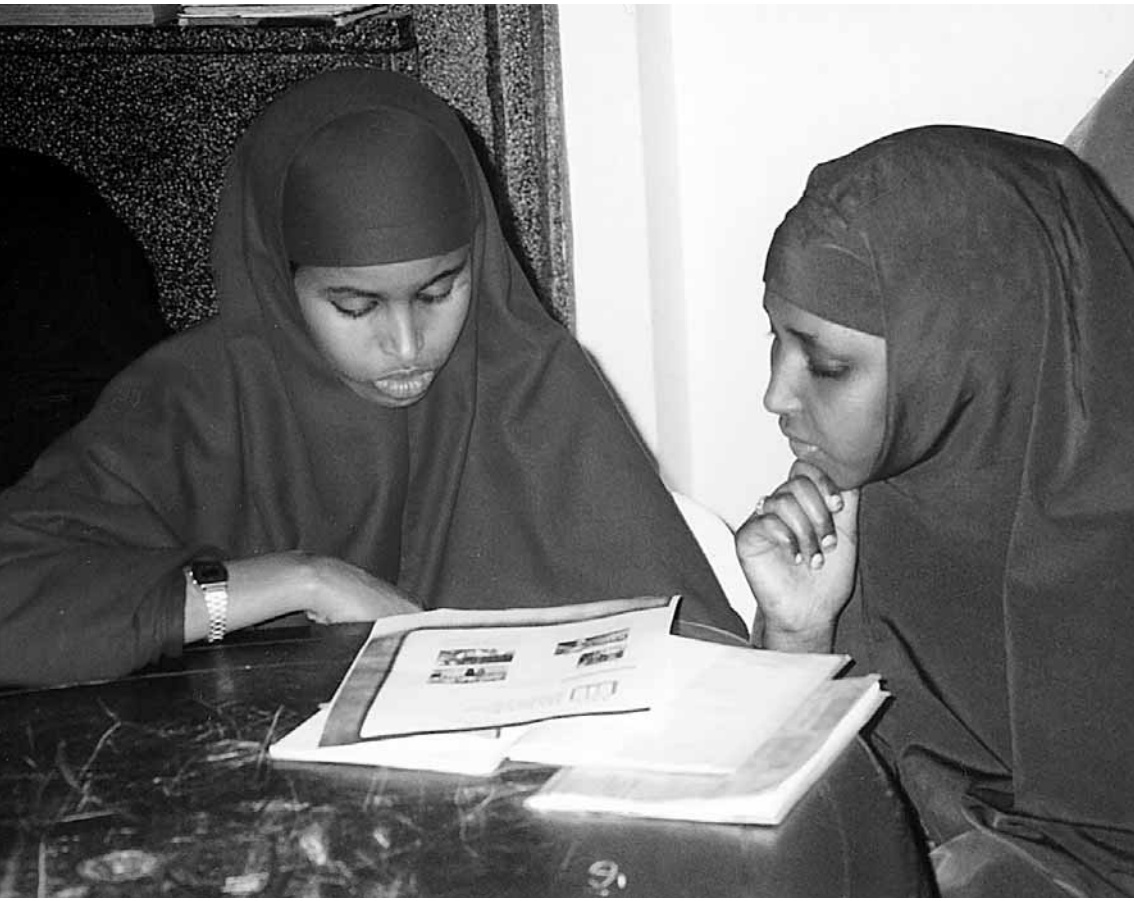
JRS is struggling to find the appropriate exit strategy. Angola is going to need peo-

ple and aid for at least 10 years, but the line with development work is very thin, so JRS has to discern how long to stay.

In striving to find the right time to leave, JRS teams working in Angola are grappling with an ever present reality inherent in work with refugees. There are no easy answers. The main thing, as Ms Cafiso underlined, is that *decisions are never taken lightly. The decision to leave is made after much deliberation, thinking, discussion with many people and institutions and weighing of the options.* Clearly, the decision to leave is made easier if the work will be continued by the local Jesuit province as was the case in Cambodia and El Salvador, or continued by the local Church, or by a local NGO.

Towards lives that are fully human

The JRS *way of proceeding* in education is rooted in the fruit of experience of individual projects, which serves to enrich the resources and guidelines directing services offered. This cyclical approach is underpinned by the pastoral dimension inherent in all JRS work. All guidelines would be of little use unless our education initiatives are rooted in a way of being which befriends, heals, empowers and brings hope to refugees. JRS workers strive to implement their projects in this spirit, endeavouring not merely to limit the extent of trauma suffered by refugees, but to help them build new lives. Thus, our way of proceeding would find fulfilment in one of the core tenets of Ignatian spirituality which inspires our work: the *greater glory of God*. For what is this if not a person who is fully alive?



Somali refugees taking literacy classes in South Africa ©*Lolin Menendez RSCJ/JRS*

Conclusion
A work in progress

May JRS continue as long as there is need from people like me.
Asked to write about his experience as a Sri Lankan Tamil refugee in southern India, Soosai Mariadass ended his account with these words. A teacher, Soosai was desperate when he reached Indian shores in 1996. He has felt sustained by JRS throughout his years in exile, from the moment a priest welcomed him as he waited to be registered on arrival, throughout his years of training and eventual employment as a headmaster.

In expressing the hope that JRS will carry on its activities, Soosai put his finger on the reality of our mission as a "work in progress". As long as there are forcibly displaced people around the world, we will accompany them on their journey, and we will keep on facing urgent new needs and challenges on the road.

The aim of this book is to share what has been learned on the journey thus far, the wealth of experiences and insight garnered in the past 25 years of the existence of JRS . The projects highlighted are steps along the way: they are examples of good practice, but not blueprints for action, just as the book is not a definitive statement on the work of JRS in education.

At the same time, it is hoped that the book will serve as a resource for future planning, compiling as it does the fruit of years of reflection on planning and running education services in the field. The projects described here indicate not only to what has been achieved, but how much more can yet be accomplished.

There are indicators for the way ahead, to discern what are the challenges and the dilemmas, and how best we can meet them. For example, one consistently felt need is preparedness for a swift response to new situations of sudden displacement. Several options arise out of lessons learned: one may be a pool of volunteers who have previously worked in emergency situations, who could serve as an advance team to intervene in a new situation at short notice, paving the way for a newly recruited team. Another possibility may be to build contingency elements into our project planning from the start, to meet unexpected – and yet somehow predictable – circumstances as they arise, such as

instances of unforeseen repatriation, or the sudden influx of large numbers of people due to the eruption of a new conflict.

Another task ahead which may be discerned from projects outlined is early planning for foreseen requirements for return or resettlement, like for example, certificates for teachers and pupils. Certification in teacher-training is another area where more can be achieved, to ensure that, as much as possible, in-service courses cover a complete curriculum over the years, thus facilitating accreditation.

In seeking ways of fulfilling these and many other tasks, JRS teams build on the years of hard work and achievements by those who have gone before them. There will always be so much more to learn and we will always be faced with limitations – our own and those posed by circumstances around us – which will prevent us from fulfilling all we wish or think should be achieved.

Perhaps it is precisely the realisation that our efforts are but steps along the way which enables us to persevere in meeting the needs of so many as effectively as possible. The words of Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador seem to say it all in this context: *No set of goals and objectives includes everything. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something and to do it well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way.*

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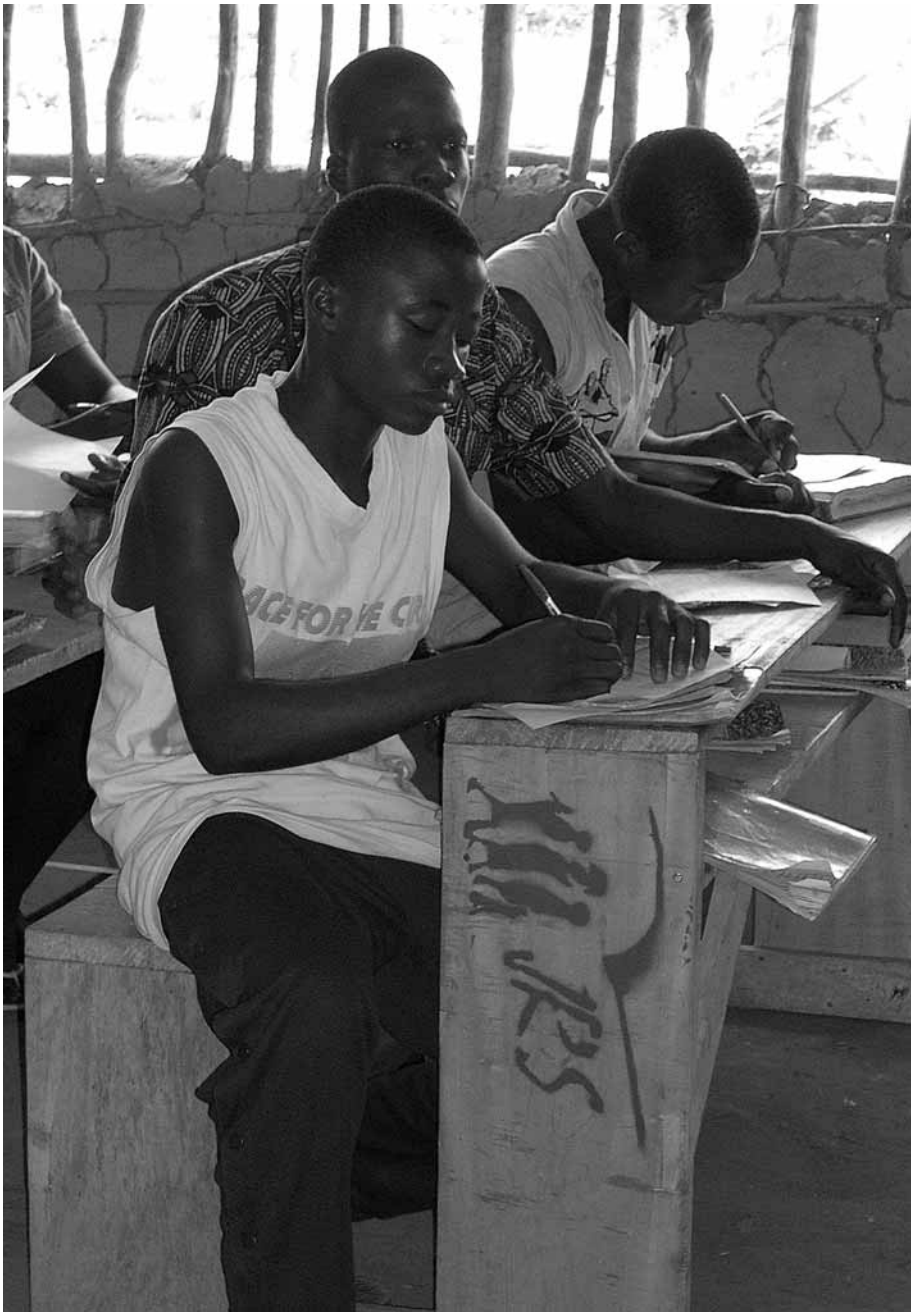

Secondary school, Liberia

©Lluís Magriñà SJ/JRS

Adult Literacy session in Nimule, south Sudan ©*Don Doll SJ/JRS*

Kakuma camp, Kenya

This book has been sponsored by: Banca Popolare di Sondrio

More than 27 million children and young people affected by conflict do not have access to formal education; ninety per cent of whom are displaced within their countries of origin.

Such findings highlight enormous and urgent needs and underscore the crucial importance of providing education for children fleeing persecution and armed conflict.

As an international organisation reaching out to forcibly displaced persons, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) offers a wealth of diverse services in accordance with its mission to accompany, serve and defend their cause.

And yet, as JRS commemorates its 25th anniversary, the provision of education stands out as a fundamental characteristic of its mission. JRS workers value a learning-based approach because they firmly believe it affirms the humanity of refugees and restores their wounded dignity. Education means planting seeds of hope in the insecure and traumatic present of refugees. From the asylum seeker in detention who pleads for language classes to the child in Uganda who walks for hours each day to go to school, the urgent need to be fed by this hope and affirmation is one and the same.

This book endeavours to trace the JRS way of proceeding by offering the reader a snapshot of the variety of its education initiatives. The projects described in these pages represent the continued dedication and professional effort of thousands of refugees and JRS workers who implement similar programmes daily across the world. This book is a celebration of their efforts.

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1980 – 2005

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