

REFUGEE

Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia

Accompany, Serve, and Advocate the Cause of Forcibly Displaced People



World Refugee Day | June 20th 2016



#WithRefugees



Open Minds, Unlock Potential

Lars Stenger



World Refugee Day: open minds, unlock potential

"No one wants to leave their country, but there are things that force you to flee. Things that make you seek refuge somewhere safe, somewhere peaceful" Dawood, asylum seeker in Indonesia

On 20 June the world observed World Refugee Day. **Over 65 million people** – mothers, fathers, sisters and children – are in search of safety after being forced to leave their homes by war, violence and persecution. Many of us are shocked not only by the cruel and inhumane deterioration in conflicts, the decline in respect for human rights and humanitarian principles in countries of origin but also about the half hearted and at times cruel reactions from people and authorities in places where refugees seek shelter and safety. People wishing to seek asylum and asking for our protection are pushed away not only in Europe, Australia but also in South East Asia. A recent boat with asylum seekers from Sri Lanka was only allowed to land and disembark in Indonesia after days of uncertainty after ferocious weather did not allow a push back.

A global wave of fear and hatred as well as incidents of violence against those asking for protection call upon all of us to stand #WithRefugees. It is in personal encounters

with them that we meet as one human being with another and are able to explore their reasons, fears and hopes. During this time many refugees feel rejected and estranged not only by the place they call home but also by the world's reaction to their plight. It is in this situation that JRS Indonesia calls on people in Indonesia and South East Asia to share their messages, thoughts, and feelings with refugees and the public via **photos posted on social media** and asks to support UNHCR's petition **#WithRefugees** to nurture hope and solidarity in our part of the world.

JRS International Director, Fr. Thomas H. Smolich SJ further calls upon all of us not only to provide refugees with a safe place to stay, but with opportunities to grow and contribute to society. To truly protect means keeping people safe from all evils, including poverty, isolation, exploitation, misconception and neglect. For this reason, this year JRS is using the theme "Open minds, unlock potential", releasing a **short video** with the words of Pope Francis and of refugees worldwide telling – in their words – what being a refugee actually means to refugees themselves.

In the video Wahida, a refugee currently living in Indonesia, pleads to us to accept a simple powerful truth, *"Refugees are human beings*

too... The way others breathe, we breathe. The way others live, have relationships, we do too. The way others have a normal life, we refugees also do." Refugees are normal people who have faced extraordinary circumstances.

"When I hear people use the word 'refugee' or 'foreigner', it just makes me realize then, how people won't accept me for who I am. They know I'm a refugee, but they make it sound like a bad thing," said Valerie, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo in South Africa.

Reflecting on the situation, JRS International Director says, "We need to reinvent our way of being together. We must show mercy to and accept one another, and this act of mercy

must be mutual and concrete. Opening doors is not enough; we must open ourselves and our minds to unlock our potential as a society." In other words, we can do better than this. We can be courageous.

JRS Indonesia is providing assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and those held in detention centers including education, psychosocial support, as well as access to healthcare, food and shelter. In collaboration with refugees and our network we hope to inspire a culture of hospitality and solidarity, encouraging encounters and understanding between the Indonesian society and the refugee community and promoting solutions for people forced to flee their home.



Some of the pictures sent by JRS supporters and by refugees themselves for World Refugee Day 2016. More pictures can be found on JRS Indonesia Facebook page: [@Jrs.Indonesia](https://www.facebook.com/Jrs.Indonesia)

Understanding the Root Cause of Refugee Flow

Capacity Building with Surabaya IDC

Franciscus Chrismanto Simamora



Gading leading the discussion with IDC Surabaya staff

Gading then played a part of a video titled “Go Back to Where You Came From” to show them the situation in Afghanistan, presenting factors that makes people flee. Then he summed up their answers and related them to 1951 Convention describing the refugee definition and criteria, and continued explaining about practices applied in IDCs in America, Europe, and the Asia Pacific.

During the session there was also a discussion about how refugee shouldn’t be handled by Immigration alone. Some suggestions emerged about the need for collaboration between Social Services, Higher Education Departments, and Police as government officials to deal with refugees and asylum seekers.

Last April, JRS initiated a workshop titled “Understanding Refugee and Asylum Seeker in International Law Perspective and Practices in Indonesia” for Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) staff in Pasuruan. There were 29 people attending this capacity building session. Opening the session, Taty Sufiani, head of IDC Surabaya, expressed her appreciation of this event as part of JRS accompaniment, whereas JRS has been present for 4 years with them. She also expressed her good wishes for JRS work in other places. She then encouraged her officers to engage actively in the discussion.

Gading Gumilang Putra, JRS Bogor senior legal service officer, started the session by explaining about situations and persecution faced by refugees, which caused them to flee and seek protection in other countries. It is difficult to advocate or serve refugees without understanding first the root cause of persecution. Answering Gading’s question of why people flee their countries, the participants said that economic factor is the main reason aside to their quarrel with their governments, law and security uncertainty in their origin countries.

Whilst discussing about communication between IDC and detainees in Surabaya, Mr. Suwondo revealed that the communication was a little inconvenient at first. Fortunately we started the community meetings. Mrs. Taty viewed community meeting as a family approach. Mr. Sahroni saw it as a means for a two way dialogue. Detainees and IDC could express their concerns, needs, and ideas to each other. Even so, Mrs. Taty said, IDC could not always accommodate all their needs and suggestions.

Concluding the discussion, Gading highlighted IDC role to initiate innovation in accompanying asylum seekers and refugees through the available rules. Being able to understand the root cause of persecution is the base of accompanying the detainees.

This capacity building session lasted for almost 5 hours. Closing the discussion, Mrs. Taty expressed her appreciation again for JRS initiative and accompaniment over the past 4 years. “JRS’ presence helps IDC work.” Before leaving the room, one of IDC staff asked JRS for material copies so he could review it again.

My Experience with Jesuit Refugee Service

Maria Chrispina Gracia

I heard about JRS for the first time on my second year in university. I was following a seminar by one of JRS staff about landmines, as part of JRS involvement in International Campaign to Ban Landmines. I got more information about JRS when I visited their national office with my friends from Magis community in Yogyakarta. I got to know more about refugee issues and JRS work, especially for refugee and asylum seeker in Indonesia.

Some of my Magis friends had already joined JRS as volunteers for their Jogjakarta project. I heard a lot from them about their meaningful experience meeting with the refugees. I started to feel the desire to also meet refugees and to apply as volunteer. But I still had doubts, I was worried I couldn't carry out my duties responsibly, as I was still finishing my final thesis.

In September 2015 I volunteered in JRS fundraising activities, then I finally decided to join as voluntary teacher. And finally this year I joined them as staff in JRS Manado project to accompany refugees and asylum seekers held in the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) Manado.

I have learnt many things since I join JRS. Meeting with refugees and asylum seekers shows me how important it is to always have hope, even in the most difficult situation. In Yogyakarta I had a chance to teach a refugee from Myanmar. We called him Uncle. He's a very cheerful 44 years old man, who is always very eager to learn. He always had hope that one day life will get better when he would be accepted in a third country.

Through that experience, I recalled the memory of my 2 classmates from Afghanistan when I was in elementary school in 2003. They are now finishing their study in a university in



Grace, Information Advocacy Officer for JRS Manado

the country where they settled. They are lucky that they are now together with their family and able to start building on their hopes and dreams in their new life. Just like my 2 friends, there are many young people who flee their country, where they left everything behind. Everything became uncertain for them, including their future. These are the situations of people I meet in Yogyakarta and Manado.

But what I find in Manado now is quite different to my experience in Yogyakarta. The refugees in Yogyakarta community house can live quite comfortably, but those in Manado

have to live in confinement. As detainees –how those refugees and asylum seekers are called in immigration detention- they cannot live freely. The detention center walls are the limits to their space to live everyday. Their activities are enclosed in the IDC walls. In this place I meet so many struggling faces, but their difficult living conditions does not make them lose their hope. They are the people fleeing war, driven to leave their family and flee their home country for a safer life. They told me many stories about their family and home, also about how difficult it is to live in detention, full of uncertainty, waiting for a very long time, and not knowing about their future.

Living in such stressful situation, they get so easily provoked, even by a very small annoyance. This also causes conflicts at times, triggered by simple misunderstandings. I realized it's not easy living in such a condition.

I often imagine how difficult their life is and it gets me emotional, even brought me to tears sometimes. In this situation, I got the strength from my teammates. By sharing our stories and experience, we encourage each other to keep accompanying our refugee brothers and sisters.

Nowadays, the world's attention is drawn to the refugee issues. But there is still not many people moved to accept the refugees' presence. As our brothers and sisters, refugees deserve to be accepted and treated as our fellow human being. They are just like us, whom longing for peace, safety and comfort, education, a proper job, and family. But they couldn't access those things because of their present situation. I hope we as society would no longer consider them as burden and obstruction, but to realize that refugees are part of our life.



JRS Manado team posing with their #WithRefugees World Refugee Day messages

A Journey of an Iraqi Survivor

Sabbar Dahham Sabbar



Sabbar Dahham Sabbar in front of IAIN Manado building

I was born in Baghdad, Iraq. It was a beautiful country, the place of the holy messengers. I took my master degree in Business Management in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia during the period of conflicts and wars in Iraq. My country is bleeding since 2003. It became like hell. The people of my country are divided into many groups based on religion and ethnicity, which lead them to fight each other and kill for nothing more than worldly pleasure.

In the middle of 2015, over four million people in Iraq are homeless and living the life of a refugee. Few of them came to Indonesia and registered at UNHCR under Indonesian grace, which provide them place to stay, food, and healthcare services. I am one of them.

In 2013, I managed to reach Indonesia and got my refugee status from UNCHR after a very long and slow process. In Manado I met JRS whom are concerned about helping refugees and asylum seekers. They managed to create a good opportunity for me to teach at IAIN (*Institut Agama Islam Negeri*/State Islamic Institute) Manado as a community servicer which allows me to share my knowledge with the local students. For me, it turned out to be a breath of life.

I'd like to talk about my first teaching experience in Indonesia. It started in 2016. I had to teach Arabic, English languages and others subjects related to Islamic business and sharia. I had taught before but it was always only few students at a time. I had no experience of classroom teaching in an Indonesian education environment. So I was more than a little worried. IAIN Manado has a pretty extensive "teaching assistance" training program which ran for an entire week. I attended all the workshops, took notes, read and reread the training assistance manual. Still I found myself slightly ill-prepared. With hindsight, my lack of confidence was pretty natural but at that point I was a bit scared to face my students.

Anyway, the appointed hour came and I had to go on. I introduced myself, asked each one of the students to do a brief introduction and got down to business. The students were well prepared – most of them had done much already in a similar field of education. The first day was a success.



Facilitating Sabbar to teach in higher education is one of JRS' ways of empowering refugees in their potential



Sabbar with his students after the class

At IAIN Manado, I have learned a lot about myself as a teacher. I feel confident at this point that I am capable of successfully teaching university level courses. I have acquired many useful skills, many of which came directly from the university seminars. In working to develop my teaching abilities I have learned much about how we learn information, good and bad ways to present material, and techniques to help combat common teaching problems to name a few. Even this reflective report is helping me verbalize and summarize what I have gotten out of the teaching process.

Few things are very special for me to mention. Firstly, it's about the Mr. Muhammad Imran, one of the lecturers at IAIN who is highly supportive and helpful to me. He even took me to his house, introduced me to his family and treats me as brother to him. Secondly, it's about the coordinator of JRS Manado (Mr. Zainuddin) who helped me a lot to get an opportunity to cooperate with immigration and university. Before given this opportunity, I was suffering intensively inside the camp of Manado. This opportunity helped me to release my overall stress level.

Altogether, I gained a lot by teaching at IAIN Manado. In my view, teaching in this university is like a performing art. No amount of reading or attending workshops will prepare you for the challenge. You only get better with practice.

For all my inexperience at IAIN Manado, I hope I made at least some contribution to the students' learning.

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