

REFUGE

Jesuit Refugee Service Indonesia

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



ROOM B

Hope
is not something
automatic; it is nothing less
than a gift

My Nightmares

Refugees in Indonesia are "Living Like Ghosts"

MSC Training for JRS Staff

Worries will not Defeat Me Because I'm Strong

My Nightmares

Elga Ayudi



"Jesuit Refugee Service's motto is to accompany, serve, and advocate for and with refugees. We listen to people's stories, we walk with people, we hear who they are, we hear what they want, and we do our best to provide services that meet those needs. More than anything, we help people find a voice, a voice to express what has happened to them, what they want, and what they can do in their future."

Fr. Tom Smolich SJ, International Director of JRS.

Farsana's* smile starts to fade and her eyes well up as she begins to tell JRS about her past, her nightmares. Farsana and her two young daughters arrived in Manado in Indonesia eight months ago where they were reunited with their dad and husband after two long years apart.

Farsana is a twenty-six year old, Hazara woman from Afghanistan. But Afghanistan is not where she grew up. When Farsana was a young girl, her parents were forced to move her and her brother to Quetta in Pakistan where they were brought up in an Afghan refugee community. Despite having fled Afghanistan, the family's new life in Pakistan was not without its perils. Extremist groups were against Hazara people, who look different and practice a different belief. Travelling outside of their village in Quetta was very dangerous for Hazara people.

Whilst Farsana's family spoke their traditional Farsi at home, young Farsana's aptitude for Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, was very important when the family needed to visit a doctor. *"I remember protesting to mum, 'why do you always take me instead of my brother?' He could speak Urdu too"*. Her mother would reply that she couldn't bear to lose her son.

It was not uncommon for Hazara people to be killed by extremist groups on their way into the city centre, or for suicide bombers to be sent into the Hazara neighbourhood. *"On Brewery Road, they would ambush and shoot our taxis, but women and children were barely targeted"*, Farsana explained. Farsana remembers these trips as being very tense, she can't forget the stares and whispers of people towards them because they looked different.

Farsana tells JRS that only Hazara people with low incomes risked travelling the dangerous roads. Her father had no option but to sell fruit and vegetables in the city centre to support his family. Every day her mum would sit by the window and wait for him. One day he came home covered in blood, a terrorist had stopped the bus carrying Farsana's father and opened fire upon the passengers. *"My father hid under the seats and was miraculously saved"*, Farsana remembers. He suffered from partial hearing loss.

After meeting at high school and getting engaged at fifteen, Farsana and Ali have been married for nine years. Farsana undertook a sewing course offered by an American organization for female refugees and uncovered her great sewing skills here. She offered her own home to teach other refugee women how to sew. *"I worked hard from the early morning, I taught other women all morning and then continued my sewing into the evening"*, she said. Most Hazara women didn't work because it was too dangerous, but the situation forced Farsana to. *"I would have received more orders if I could open a shop, but we had to do it quietly"*. Whilst Farsana tailored, Ali worked with her father selling fruit and vegetables.

Whilst refugees in Quetta were allowed to work (unlike in Indonesia), they weren't able to live in peace because of the daily life-threatening situation. Ali left Pakistan in search of a better future for the family when Farsana was pregnant with her second child. *"My mother and neighbour helped me in labour"*. Sadly soon after, her mother's health started to deteriorate. When Farsana's mother died, she says it was the trigger to leave Pakistan and follow her husband. They had lost contact with her brother after he got married, and her dad had also died. *"It was the hardest six months of my life... I cried almost every day and would always ask Ali what to do on the phone"*. Farsana tells JRS she felt lonely and confused with two little daughters to protect.



JRS recognises the human dignity in refugees through accompaniment. Our accompaniment affirms that God is present in human history, even in its most tragic episodes.

Like most Hazara refugees in Pakistan, Farsana didn't have any official documents so she had to travel back to Afghanistan to try and obtain forged papers from the smuggler system. Funds raised by selling her house and help from friends saw Farsana and her two daughters to Indonesia. They travelled from Afghanistan to India, onto Makasar (Sulawesi, Indonesia) and finally to Manado (North Sulawesi) Immigration Detention Centre where Ali was detained. *"They [immigration staff] were yelling at me and asking questions. I was so confused I told them my father's last name instead of my husband's. Fortunately IOM [International Organisation for Migration] recognised my husband too."*

Although Farsana, Ali, and their daughters are reunited and are living in a room funded by IOM, Farsana continues to suffer anxiety. *"Can you believe I still have nightmares even though we're actually safe now?"*

Farsana has started English lessons and dreams of becoming more fluent. *"Bahasa Indonesia is too difficult for me!"* She wants her children to live happily and have the opportunity to study. She worries it is too hard to get enough access and attention in Manado and so hopes to be transferred to Jakarta or Makasar, where the cities are bigger and hopefully, the opportunities too.

Refugees in Indonesia Are "Living Like Ghosts"

Abdullah Sarwari

Refugees are human - just like everyone else we have hopes, dreams and aspirations

Not long ago, a young father hanged himself in Bogor, West Java. He was a refugee trapped in Indonesia. After the U.N. refugee agency (UNHCR) informed refugees in Indonesia that it is unlikely they will ever be resettled, he lost all hope - and with it his life. The lack of a long-term solution for refugees is taking its toll on the resilience of vulnerable people here in Indonesia. His despair represents all refugees here. I know because I am also one of the 14,000 refugees trapped in Indonesia.

According to UNHCR, during the first six months of 2017, only about 322 refugees out of over 14,000 refugees here were resettled to a third country. Indonesia, once seen as a transit point for those seeking refuge, is now looking more and more like a permanent home. But this permanent home does not provide permanent protection.

Indonesia is not a signatory to the 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention. So people like my sister and I - who made our way to Indonesia in pursuit of safety - are now safe from ethnic-based violence, but not from discrimination and poverty.

Indonesia tolerates us but does not allow us to work or study. We spend our time wondering what's next for us? Where will our next meal come from? What will the UNHCR say the next time they visit? How will we survive without being able to work?

Our nightmares are fuelled by the constant reminder that if we wanted to move back to Pakistan, where I was born, or



Classroom in JRS Learning Centre.

Afghanistan, where our parents are from, UNHCR would assist in our relocation. But both are impossible to go back to - and UNHCR can't assist us here.

When I fled the city of Quetta, Pakistan, in 2014, I was only 15 years old. Part of the ethnic Hazara minority there, we were targeted by extremists who killed our people regularly. I left in search of a safer life and never imagined I would end up in Indonesia, living like a ghost.

Most kids grow up dreaming of being a professional basketball player or a marine biologist but I just wanted to live in a safe place. A place where I didn't have to worry that one day I might be murdered for simply being who I am, a young Hazara man.

Anxious and determined, I fled Pakistan with dreams of one day finding sanctuary and rebuilding my life. But instead, I am stuck in perpetual limbo, robbed of my basic human rights.

Recently, UNHCR visited refugees in our area to inform them that they may never be resettled. So, just as the number of refugees worldwide has reached record levels, resettlement options are dwindling.

Resettlement is not a solution and neither is repatriation - because a refugee is by definition a person who has been assessed as unable to return to their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution. This leaves integration in the transit host country as the only solution - but integration is impossible without the rights of a citizen. So what can we do?

LEARNING LIFELINE

Rather than curse the darkness, I decided to light a candle. Three years ago, I helped establish an informal learning centre giving refugee children living in Indonesia access to a basic education while we await our uncertain fate.

More than 30 volunteers from the refugee community, most of whom are around university age, work tirelessly at the centre. We teach 140 children aged between five and 17, and we also offer English classes to empower women and young mothers.

However, the centre is under constant threat of being shut down by the authorities. Financially, the centre is only operational due to generous donations from individuals, and each new rental period finds us begging for funds.

The learning centre is a vital lifeline for both the students and volunteer teachers, but we are still left wondering: What future are we educating these children for?

"I wish people would take time to get to know me first before judging who I am as a person," said Muhaddisa, a 13-year-old refugee girl from Afghanistan who is trying to learn the Indonesian language while continuing her studies at the learning centre.

"When I get to meet someone who is not a refugee, they always think I'm poor and

uneducated." Muhaddisa is right. I want people to understand that the label "refugee" is a term encompassing people from all religions, ethnicities, social status and backgrounds. It doesn't make us weak, illiterate or helpless.

RESPECT FOR REFUGEES

Rather than being looked down upon, refugees need a helping hand to lift us up during this difficult time. This helping hand could be in the form of a friendship, a chance for us to volunteer or attend courses, and even skilled individuals to assist us at the learning centre.

The thing is, refugees are human. Just like everyone else we have hopes, dreams and aspirations, but we were just not lucky enough to be born in a safe country free from persecution. Most refugees have already been through so much that all we want is some peace and quiet in our lives. We respect the rules and we respect our Indonesian hosts, but we still want an opportunity to prove who we are and what we can do.

We just want a future before our resilience ebbs away. We want you to see us for who we are, not the circumstances we find ourselves in. We want you to acknowledge the injustice of our situation and work with us to find solutions. We want your friendship and respect, not your pity.

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Classroom in JRS Learning Centre.

MSC Training for JRS staff

Lars Stenger



16-20 April 2018, nineteen JRS Indonesia staff members got together to learn about how to use the Most Significant Change method in evaluating our accompaniment, services and advocacy. The four day training and implementation enabled us to better understand refugees lives before and after JRS services and asked them what was the most significant change that they experienced after attending activities or receiving support from JRS. Changes such as English learners now feeling more confident in daily interactions, being able to fill in simple forms and finding their way around different locations. Being able to read English was said to be one of the first steps towards accessing online information to solve everyday or specific problems. Most significant change stories are published as articles and one as a short film.

Worries Will Not Defeat Me Because I'm Strong

Nadhar Abdul*



Nadhar Abdul told JRS his story.

I left Afghanistan on December 2016 with my wife and four of my children. It was a two days trip to Indonesia. First stop was in Delhi, which was very difficult for me because I couldn't speak English at all. There I felt the need to learn English so I could communicate with other people. The second stop was in Malaysia then to Indonesia after eight hours of transit.

Arriving in Indonesia, I remembered the time when I was in India. It was again so challenging to communicate with other people. On early 2017 I decided to join an English class. February 2017 was the first time I attended JRS English class. I didn't feel comfortable at that time; I was 46 years old, I felt old. It's difficult for me to digest the study materials. I had a headache on the first few days studying. After one month, when I finally could learn my first word 'beautiful,' I started gaining my confidence. I believe that I can do this.

My first teacher was Murtaza. He is my favorite teacher. I felt a lot more confidence when I finally can write and do spelling. When I'm in the class, I love to write, it helps me to remember words. But I don't

write in English for other purposes. I hope that I can get better and do it well in the future.

When I finally started to speak a little bit of English, I feel confident talking with people in the market, I can text with my mobile phone, I even can watch movies with subtitles. Family movies are my favorite. In the class, we usually watch Hollywood movies. I can say that now I understand at least 50% of the story. I feel proud even though when I have to read the subtitle slowly.

In Afghanistan, I came from Maidan Wardak province and I had lot of jobs. I drove, once I was shopkeeper, I also did stitching and embroidery for my work as a tailor. Being a tailor is also my hobby, I love to work on it. I left my education on 1989 when I was in the 7th grade or in the secondary school. It was a long time ago before I join the class again in 2017. I wasn't feeling confident, but when the first periodic report came out and I was in the 4th position of the class, I feel even more confident.

My aim is just to learn English, so I can communicate with other people. I don't really take into account, where I am. It doesn't matter whether I'm in Australia, America or Indonesia, the important thing is I can learn English so I can communicate with people, and it makes my life easier because I can solve problems. In one year I was only absent for three days; one day because I fall asleep, one day because I was sick, and another day was because I thought there was no class on Indonesia's Independence Day.

My children also study English in another learning center called RLC. But they have

better English than me. I think because they are young and still able to learn quickly so they are better in many things than me. I usually speak with my daughter to train our English. My wife doesn't speak English, but now she's starting to learn English in JRS English class. I sometimes teach her simple things such as; hi, how are you, how are you doing, and sometimes I called her beautiful. It makes us comfortable. I also train my English by speaking with my classmates. It happens usually when we meet in the JRS learning center.

I'm also eager to learn Bahasa Indonesia. My first word of bahasa was '*bagus*' ('good') and '*sampai jumpa*' ('see you again'). Even though I have a headache because of the teaching method, I still want to learn Bahasa because now I live in Indonesia. I learnt '*bagus*' from outside of the class. For me, '*bagus*' and '*beautiful*' is a positive word and can affect positively to the people.

In the future, I hope that I can help people with my English. I hope that I can teach my children and also other people. For me, it's very good to give your skills and energy to help people in need. My simplest wish is I can read an English book for my children, doesn't matter where we are at that time.

I feel confident that I can solve my problems. If you have confidence, you can do anything. Even in the future, in some part of my thought, I feel worries because currently I'm a refugee. I have problems financially and education for my children. But I believe these worries will not defeat me because I'm strong. As long as I'm in Indonesia, I won't stop studying English for my future.

*Name has been changed to protect identity



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