

# Servir



## Angola – Returning Home

Also in this issue: *Liberia, Aceh, East and West Timor, Europe  
Landmines, Working with young refugees.*



Jesuit Refugee Service

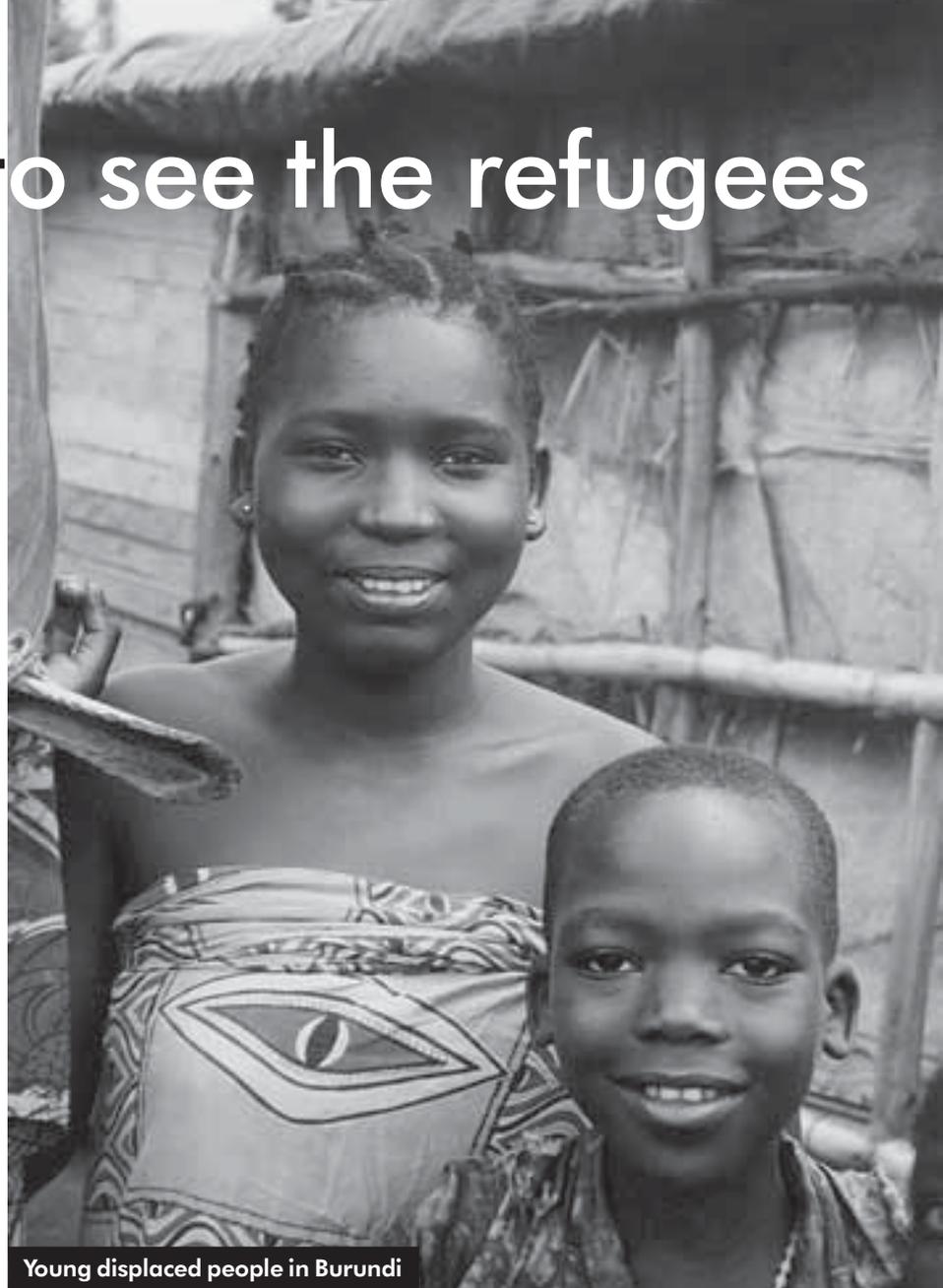
# Choosing to see the refugees

In the last edition of *Servir*, which was published in June to coincide with World Refugee Day, I used the editorial page to speak about young refugees and the particular dangers to which this highly vulnerable group is exposed. The theme of this year's World Refugee Day, 20 June, was "Refugee Youth: building the future", and the events organised on that day by JRS and other refugee agencies were hugely successful in drawing attention to the plight of young people who have been displaced from their homes and whose lives have been shattered because of war.

However, one day to focus on such an important example of injustice in our world is not enough. For much of the rest of the year, displaced people are more or less forgotten about, remaining invisible as far as the world's media and governments are concerned. This fact can be demonstrated by the lack of funding provided to assist refugees.

Refugee agencies are finding it more and more difficult to secure funds for many of their projects. This is in part due to the increase in the number of displaced people and therefore needs, but is also a by-product of an unwillingness of the wealthier nations to keep their commitments to development aid and humanitarian action programmes. The funding shortfalls are felt more acutely by those organisations, such as JRS, that do not normally work in high-profile emergency situations, but which instead concentrate more on long-term displacement scenarios with the forgotten refugees, who do not enjoy a high profile in the world's media or on the international agenda.

This issue of *Servir* again looks at the topic of young refugees who have been shamefully neglected and forgotten about. We include articles dealing with the efforts JRS has been making to provide an education for displaced children in Liberia and the effect that the renewed conflict there has had on the project. We also look at two zones in Indonesia, Aceh and West Timor, where many young people are trying to



Young displaced people in Burundi

come to terms with the damage that violence and displacement has inflicted on their lives, their education, and their families. Included also, is an article that reflects upon working with young refugees and also examines what conditions they can expect to find when they arrive in Europe.

Two other pieces included in this issue, both dealing with Angola, offer a note of great hope. The first is a compelling story about a very brave young Angolan refugee who lost his leg to a landmine and whose courage and resilience is acting as a source of inspiration to all those around him. The other article, featured on the centre pages, highlights the situation in Angola where, with the restoration of peace following a long-running civil war, a large scale assisted repatriation and resettlement programme is now under way.

Refugees remain invisible only if we choose not to see them. To see is an act of solidarity. Let us open our eyes.



Lluís Magrià SJ is JRS International Director



# Standing Tall

Lolín Menéndez RSCJ

*Not so long ago Americo Sawandi was living in Jamba and enrolled in first grade – just one more ordinary football-loving boy.*

**H**e told us the story of October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Americo was returning from the fields with his father near the Kwando River, in the direction of Mavinga. His father was walking ahead when Americo deviated some metres from the path, detonating the mine that shattered and crushed his left leg. All that he remembers is a very loud noise as he lost consciousness. Americo's father immediately cleaned the wound with warm salt water, tied the leg with his trousers and carried his son on his back, looking for a hospital. At first, the father was reluctant to cross into Zambia, but the unavailability of medical care in Angola spurred his decision to cross the Kwando River. He crossed the river by canoe and reached Kaungamashi, Zambia two days later. Father and son were fortunate to get a lift from the police or the military, and eventually to reach Senanga District Hospital. The doctor immediately performed an amputation above the knee, and saved Americo's life.

Americo was discharged from the hospital on November 16<sup>th</sup> and now lives in Nangweshi Refugee Camp with his father, but has not seen his mother since the day of the accident. He had to spend one month recovering at the Health Centre. When his wounds healed, JRS began to accompany him as he learned to walk with the aid of crutches, and prepared him to be fitted with a prosthesis in the future. It seems that Americo has good prospects for a full recovery, thanks to prompt assistance from those who helped him, to the medical care he received, and to his father who rarely left him unattended. Now he has learned to walk with crutches, and has been measured for a prosthesis. He is the youngest beneficiary, alas, of the JRS programme in Nangweshi, where amputees and land mine survivors learn to make and repair prostheses for others in the same condition.

Americo says "the new leg is too heavy". He prefers the crutches because at least he can play and move around quite speedily. When he is among friends, he feels like a 'normal' boy. "My best friend is Celestino, because he helps my father to carry water for me to bathe", he mentioned with a big smile. He likes Maths and would like to be a teacher or a doctor one day. For the moment, he is an intelligent and resilient youth who seems to be blessed with the coping skills necessary to overcome his disability,



**Americo Sawandi, 10 years old, walks confidently with his new crutches**

full of hope for the future. He inspires everybody around him with the powerful message that a disability, or any problem, for that matter, is not the end of life.



**Sr Lolín Menéndez was JRS Education Resource Person for Africa from 1997 to 2003**

# Education of the young: a victim of war



A crowded displacement camp near Monrovia, Liberia

Alberto Saccavini

*An intensification of the civil conflict in Liberia has come as a serious blow to the new JRS education project near the capital city Monrovia. Alberto Saccavini gives his first hand account of events.*

## **T**he dream is to provide schooling for over 3,000 displaced children

JRS' most recent involvement in Liberia began in August 2002, with what was the first of several evaluation visits, laying the groundwork for a project to assist some of the estimated one hundred thousand people who had recently been displaced by conflict throughout the country. In April 2003, a small team began to put in place the foundations of an Education project aimed at providing schooling to around 3,600 displaced children in the Camps in Montserrado County, just outside the capital city, Monrovia. However, with an intensification in fighting between the LURD rebel group and Liberian government forces near the capital city, the immediate future of the project is under threat.

## **40% of the displaced population should be at school**

The aim of the new project is to help provide a sense of

stability and of "normality" to the young displaced population through a formal education system that is sorely lacking in the area. In the camps, more than 40% of the population should be at school, but for most of them, the last two years has been a time of displacement, a world in which the basic right of education is absent.

Political instability is the key word in Liberia. In April 2003, a new rebel group, MODEL (movement for Democracy in Liberia), initiated an offensive against governmental forces in the south-east of the country, and in a very short space of time took over control of several counties and cities in the region up to the sea ports of Greenville and Harper.

In the north of the country, the other rebel movement LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy) continued their own offensive, which included at-

tacks against Gbarnga city to the east of Monrovia, which they managed to hold for a number of weeks. On two occasions, the rebels reached the area that houses the camps for displaced people, which is located just outside Monrovia. It was during these attacks that the work of the JRS education project was severely disrupted, particularly in two of the camps.

It was a serious blow to the project, which, until then, had been progressing at a very fast pace. The beginning of the school year in September had already been planned and the decision had been taken to increase the number of grades in each of the four schools from six to eight and the number of teachers from 25 to 40. This, it was hoped, would have catered for a total student population of 3,600 that had already registered, exceeding the original estimates of 2,500.

At the beginning of June the situation deteriorated once more. On Thursday 5 June the LURD rebels launched a fresh attack on Monrovia, arriving at the city port within two days and causing the further displacement of those people who had been seeking refuge in the camps in

Montserrado as well as many of the capital's inhabitants, who fled into the city centre, taking shelter in school buildings and a stadium. The security situation was so dangerous, that around 500 foreign nationals, including the author, were evacuated on 9 June. French army helicopters arrived in Monrovia and brought us from the EU compound to a French naval vessel and from there to Abidjan in Ivory Coast.

The violence and the evacuations have been devastating for the education project, which had not moved beyond the school building construction phase. All of the activities that were planned for June and July, including the end of the building work and the recruitment of the teachers, were put on hold until the evolving situation becomes more stable. Two of the camps where the schools are to be located were reduced to little more than battlefields. The more positive news is that the other two chosen locations have so far remained relatively unaffected.

As this magazine goes to print, it is difficult to predict what the future will hold for both the long-suffering Liberian people as well as the new JRS education project. Will an international peace keeping force be able to restore and maintain peace and will the President step aside, as he has been called on to do by most interested parties? As these questions of high politics are being negotiated and worked through, the education of the most vulnerable, the young displaced, continues to suffer.



Alberto Saccavini is a JRS  
Project Director in Liberia

Building work on the new schools



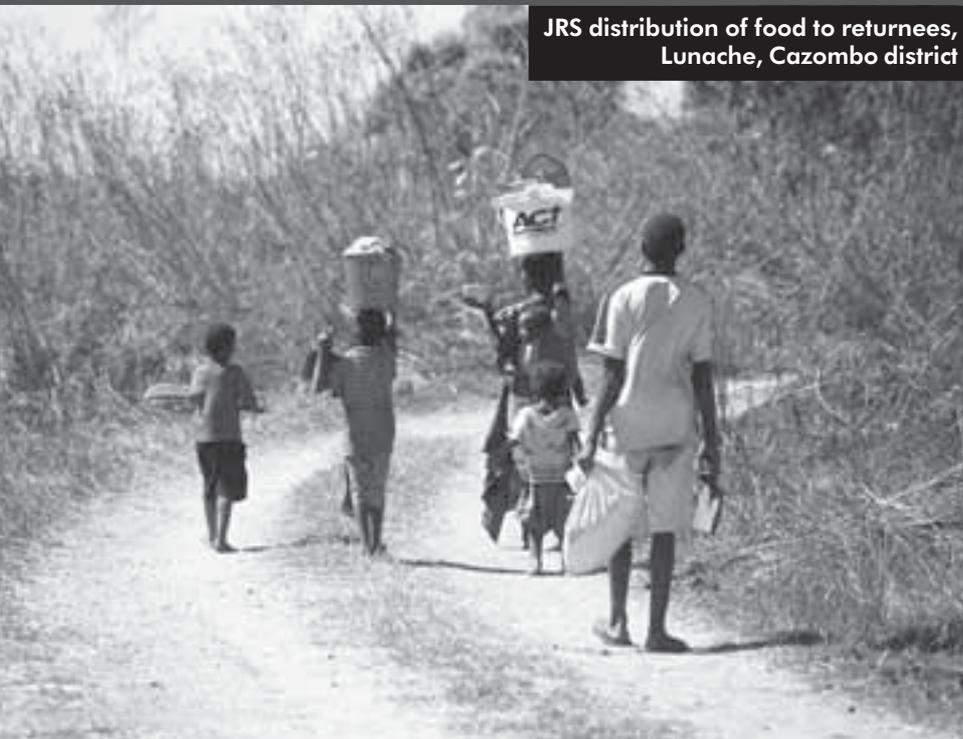
# Return and resettlement in An

**27** long years of civil war and destruction came to an abrupt end in Angola in February 2002, with the death of rebel leader Jonas Savimbi. A country torn apart by decades of conflict then embarked on a peace process that has given great hope of returning home to many millions of Angolans who have been displaced by the violence. When the cease-fire was signed in April 2002, it was estimated that there were up to four million internally displaced people within Angola and a further 400,000 Angolan refugees living in neighbouring countries, principally in Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Namibia.

While thousands of Angolan refugees have been returning home on their own initiative since the end of the conflict, the assisted voluntary repatriation programme officially got under way at the beginning of July 2003, with the first small groups of assisted returnees arriving from Namibia, Zambia, and DR Congo. The programme aims to bring home 150,000 Angolan refugees by the end of 2003.

JRS has been accompanying and assisting Angolan refugees in neighbouring countries, as well as working with internally displaced people within Angola itself for many years.

JRS is playing its part in the repatriation and resettlement programmes.



JRS distribution of food to returnees, Lunache, Cazombo district

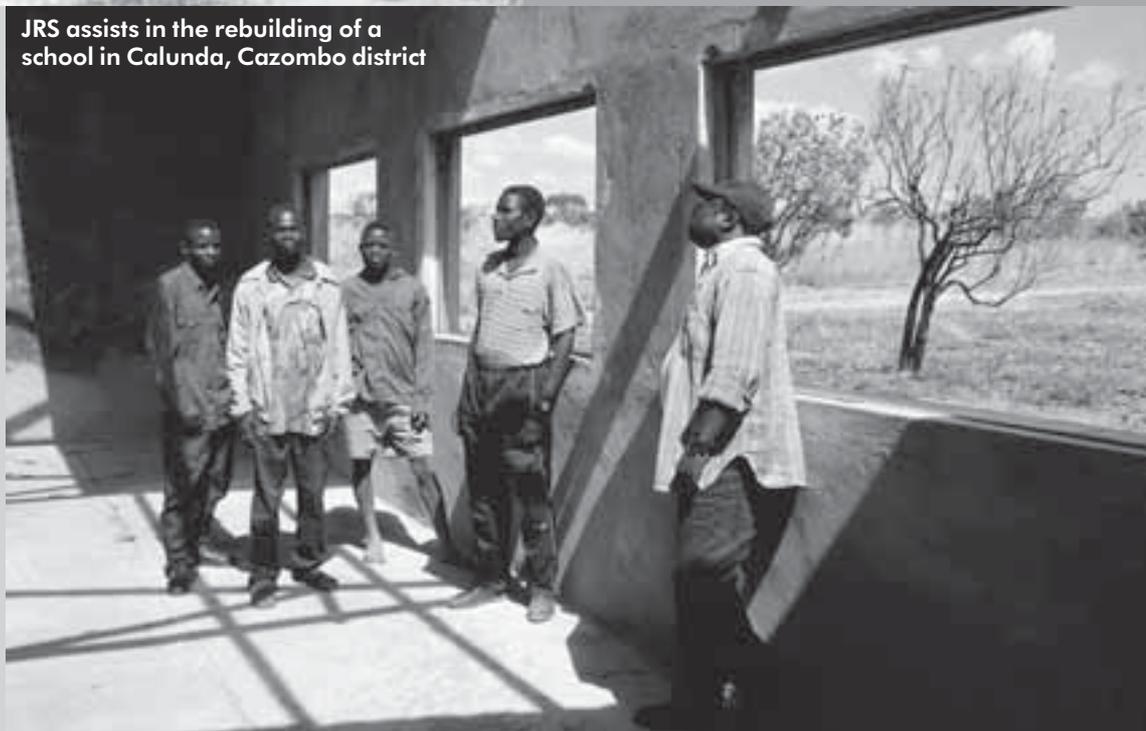
Cazombo district in the east of Angola, where a large reception centre has been constructed, is one of the focal point for refugees returning from Zambia. The centre will welcome back and register the returnees, housing them for a number of days, offering them an initial place to rest. From here, the refugees will then be transported to their villages and places of origin in the region. JRS will accompany and assist the most vulnerable, in particular the elderly and the physically disabled.

Calunda is a village close to the Zambian border.

It is the first stop for the returning refugees, a place where they can rest for a short break on the journey.

Some of the village's inhabitants have recently returned and JRS is assisting the community to rebuild a school.

JRS assists in the rebuilding of a school in Calunda, Cazombo district



gola



A shoe-making workshop for landmine survivors displaced in Luena

JRS is particularly concerned with the displaced people who are most in need, including victims of land mines. In Luena, in the East of Angola, JRS provides training in a number of trades such as carpentry, shoe-making, and bread baking as well as support for income generating activities and micro-credit programmes.

Each building is divided into four parts, with four separate entrances. Each part will house one returning family for a number of days, before they continue their journey home. The centre also has several kitchens, which the returnees can use to cook, as well as a number of dining canteens.



Reception centre in Cazombo

Helping to rebuild a school near Negage



During the conflict many people fled to Negage City in the north of the country. After peace was restored, the displaced people began to return to their homes in the surrounding area, though many found that everything in their villages had been destroyed. In several villages JRS is helping local communities to rebuild schools.

# Indonesia: young lives in conflict

Ingvild Solvang

## Education for young displaced people from Aceh

13-year-old Sri has fond memories of her home village in North Aceh. Though she has lived in a camp in North Sumatra for three years, such a long time for someone so young, she still misses her old friends. "I had many friends back home, and very nice teachers", she remembers. "I was very sad the day we were forced to leave. The whole village was chaotic. The schools closed, and my teachers fled. Our neighbours and friends, who stayed behind, cried and told us that they would help protect us, but my parents were too afraid. We left our belongings behind, and travelled to North Sumatra," she quietly recounts.

Formal education is often unavailable for children in refugee camps, especially for those who have already passed through primary level. If local schools do exist they are often too expensive for destitute refugee families to afford. Sri is one of the lucky ones. She is in second grade of a local junior secondary school near the camp in Sei Lapan, about three hours from Medan. JRS has been able to provide her with a scholarship, as her family could not afford the school fees. "I love to study because it will make me smart!" Sri says with great hope. In the camp, education is still only available for elementary schoolchildren, and only a few young people have the opportunity to take their studies further.

In a resettlement area in South Tapa-nuli district, North Sumatra, a JRS field officer gives occasional training to the children. "They really like it," he says, "every time I come to the camp they ask me to teach them something. And believe it or not, they also beg me to give them homework". Homework is not normally the favourite activity of students in Indonesia, though it

seems that children in conflict zones become more aware of the importance of schooling, and they seem eager to get on with their lives and continue the search for a better future that others take for granted.

"We will never return to Aceh", Sri says suddenly, anticipating the question on the lips of the JRS workers, unspoken for fear of upsetting her. "I know that more people are fleeing from Aceh now that the problems there are getting worse", she says. "I heard that on the radio". Despite being only 13, she works hard to understand what is happening to her by piecing together the fragments of information that she picks up. Knowing this, it seems apparent that giving the youth the possibility to go to school is vital for peace-building efforts in the future.

In Aceh, tens of thousands of students have been left without school buildings after groups went on a cruel burning spree throughout the region, as part of the most recent round of violence. Students and teachers cried while watching their school buildings go up in flames. "It made me very sad, because I feel that I am being made stupid. Why did they have to burn our school?" a student of a junior secondary school in Aceh Besar asked JRS.

Young displaced people in North Sumatra



## Separated refugee children in West Timor

On the other side of Indonesia, in West Timor, many young refugees still live with the consequences of the violence that broke out in East Timor in 1999. Miriam (18) was left by her parents when she was 14. "They left me with strangers, I don't really know why," she remembers with bitterness in her voice. According to UNHCR estimates, there are about 750 minors who were separated from their families during the conflict. Now, four years later the young are placed in the middle of painful negotiations between caretakers, who have grown to love their foster children as their own, and biological parents, who now want their children back.

The decision to leave their children was obviously not one that was reached lightly, taken by fleeing fathers and moth-

ers in the desperate hope of a safer existence for their children in West Timor or other parts of Indonesia. It is clear, however, that a new and peaceful life in newly independent East Timor cannot begin until families are reconciled and old wounds attended to.

Miriam's foster parents have become her new family now. "They are good to me, although it was difficult in the beginning when I still missed my mother and father," she remembers. "Now, I often hate my parents, because they did not take care of me," she says fiercely. Her feelings for her biological parents have been brought to the surface lately because she knows that they are on their way to see her. JRS works with a programme that aims to settle the cases between the biological parents, children and caretakers. This involves organising negotiations and meetings across the border, and mediating so that what is

in the best interest of the young person can be identified. Miriam's parents are anxious to be reunited with their daughter, and have signed up for the programme. Miriam's foster parents are scared that Miriam will leave them. "She has been with us for a long time, and we fear that she will not be happy in East Timor. There are more opportunities for her here," her foster father explains. The meeting between the parties becomes even tenser than they all feared. Miriam unleashes her anger towards her parents, and refuses to go back with them.

JRS staff in West Timor explain that there are never easy solutions to these cases. "It is not possible to say that one side is right and the other is wrong; what is important is to try to find what is best for the young person involved, and to include them in the decision making process. Sometimes we are able to find durable solutions, which all parties agree to. However, we can all imagine that in such sensitive cases, rules of rationality do not always apply". All parties become victims, and most of all the young, who are put in the impossible position of having to make a choice.



Ingvild Solvang is  
Information Officer  
for JRS Indonesia

An East Timor refugee in West Timor



# It need not be a future without hope: working with young refugees

John Dardis SJ

**W**hen I think of young refugees I have three images in mind. The first is when I was working in the refugee camps in Tanzania with those who had fled from Rwanda. My work involved meeting many young refugees aged between 18 and 22, many of whom had fled Kigali and other towns in Rwanda. Some had been half way through university studies in law, engineering or medicine. Many said they felt no hope. The last time people had to flee Rwanda they had to stay away for 30 years. They got married, they had a family and they were stuck in a camp all their lives. This is the predicament that many young refugees felt at the time. Their lives were on hold. Perhaps they would never go back to Rwanda. Perhaps they would never resume their studies. In the end, the refugees did go back. But I lost touch with the young people and I still do not know if they were able to start their lives again.

A second image also relates to that time in Tanzania. I was approached by a young Rwandan man in his early twenties. He had been a seminarian back in Rwanda and he wanted to be a priest in the Catholic Church. "Here we have no hope" he said, "nobody

helps us to pray, nobody speaks of God; can you help us?" And so I began to meet with him and four or five others to talk about prayer, about religion and to keep hope alive. There in the midst of horrible desolation was a group of people who really wanted to believe that there was something more, that God did exist. Young refugees with a depth of spirituality that amazed me.

My third image comes from a recent visit to a detention centre in Slovenia. The centre was very well run and very well fitted out. It had a small section for children who had come with their parents and who were waiting to be sent back because they were people without a proper asylum claim. But my lasting image is of seeing a three year old child wave goodbye to me from behind the bars as I left to go back to Ljubljana. She would remain behind, virtually a prisoner in this centre. Again, it was nobody's fault that she was there and the system was trying to be kind to her but I asked myself: "Is it right that in Europe in the 21st century a three-year-old girl should be behind bars? Is that the way that we want to deal with the issues of migration or asylum?"

## Working with young refugees in Italy



In Europe, JRS reaches out in a specific way to young people who have come on their own (unaccompanied minors). In Malta we have just begun to work with the government to open a new house for unaccompanied minors. In Belgium, a young Jesuit works with another NGO helping unaccompanied minors and refugee children. Across Europe this is becoming an increasing issue. Latest statistics for the year 2000 show that just over 16,000 separated children applied for asylum in 26 European countries. This is about 4% of the total number of asylum claims. However, in Hungary and

the Netherlands separated children accounted for 15% of all applications lodged in 2000 and in Slovakia it was 9%. Most of the separated children are male and only 27% are female.

The kind of conditions that refugee children can expect in Europe are laid down in a recent European Union directive on the reception conditions for refugees. Article 12 of the new directive states that "Member States shall ensure that minor children of applicants for asylum and applicants for asylum who are minors, have access to the education system under the same conditions as nationals for so long as a Deportation Order against them or their parents cannot actually be enforced". This means that even if an asylum claim is rejected the child will continue to go to school until actual deportation takes place. This is important since Deportation Orders can take a long time to enforce. The Directive also says that the Member States cannot refuse continued secondary education even if the person concerned reaches the age of majority.

Finally, access to the education system cannot be postponed for more than 65 working days after the application has been lodged by the minor or the minor's parents. This is a concern. 65 working days is in fact about three months. In terms of accommodation, the new EU rule says that minor children

shouldn't be separated from their parents or from the adult family member responsible for them.

Article 24 of the Directive says clearly that the best interest of the child should be the primary consideration for member states. It also says that minors who have been victims of any kind of torture or neglect or abuse should have access to rehabilitation services. In the case of unaccompanied minors, member states have to ensure that a guardian for each unaccompanied minor is appointed. This Directive is a recent one and was approved in 2002. Member States have a number of years in which to ensure that it is implemented in national law. It is important that NGOs such as JRS monitor this process and ensure that national legislation is in line with this European Directive.

Young refugees carry a big burden from the past with them. 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 is Regional  
Director of JRS Europe

## JRS – Working with and for young refugees

*Some other examples of JRS' work with the young:*

- **KOSOVO:** JRS runs a programme to assist young mine victims in Kosovo, which includes an annual two-week summer camp for 25 young mine survivors.
- **CHILD SOLDIERS:** JRS is a founding member of the *Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers*, campaigning to draw attention to the plight of an estimated 300,000 child soldiers currently fighting in more than 35 countries.
- **TANZANIA:** In Kibondo district, JRS conducts Peace seminars and workshops with young Burundian refugees.
- **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO:** In Bukavu, over 2,000 displaced children are assisted by JRS to attend school.
- In the **MOLUCCAS, INDONESIA**, JRS provides scholarships, transportation fees, books, uniforms and other materials to school students, as well as assisting with the renovation of school buildings.
- In **INDIA**, JRS runs centres for 70 refugee girls who have dropped out of school, offering help in re-building self confidence as well as practical skills.
- **COLOMBIA:** In Barrancabermeja, JRS works with young displaced people who are vulnerable because of the conflict, informing them of their rights and helping them to secure their entitlements.
- In the **USA**, JRS offers pastoral care and counselling to young asylum seekers who are held in detention.

# How to help one person

**T**he mission of JRS is to accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people, especially those who are forgotten about and who do not attract international attention. We do this through our projects in over 50 countries world-wide, providing assistance in the form of education, health care, pastoral work, skills training, income generating activities and many more services to the refugees.

JRS relies for the most part on donations from private individuals and development and church agencies.

*Here are some examples of how JRS funds are used:*

- To provide medical care to one displaced person in Baringa, in the north of the DRC  
**\$20 US**

- To provide emergency assistance to one displaced person in the Moluccan Islands, Indonesia  
**\$25 US**

- To provide emergency support (food, shelter, health care, other assistance) to one Colombian refugee in Venezuela  
**\$150 US**

- To assist one returning refugee family with temporary shelter in Sri Lanka  
**\$160 US**

- To provide temporary accommodation and food for one month to one refugee in Italy  
**\$700 US**

- To organise an annual summer camp for 25 child mine victims in Kosovo  
**\$7,000 US**

*Servir* is published by the Jesuit Refugee Service, established by Pedro Arrupe SJ, in 1980.

JRS, an international Catholic organisation, accompanies, serves, and advocates the cause of refugees and forcibly displaced people.

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Returnees in Lunache, Cazombo district, Angola; Stefano Maero/JRS

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Your continued support makes it possible for us to help refugees and asylum seekers in over 50 countries. If you wish to make a donation, please fill in this coupon and forward it to the JRS International office. Thank you.  
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