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New solutions for new times

JRS marks 25 years of learning from and with refugees

On 14. November 1980 when Fr General Pedro Arrupe SJ called on Jesuits to establish the Jesuit Refugee Service, there were only 16 million refugees in the world. JRS was to be a new apostolate for the Society and opened new paths of service and learning with the refugees. Today, 25 years later, with more than 40 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, the context in which we work has changed dramatically.

More than ever the effects of growing inequality, cheaper communications, access to armaments, and environmental degradation, to name but a few, are pushing millions to flee their countries and towns of origin. While international protection for forcibly displaced persons is ever more elusive.

“The number of people displaced within their own countries now exceeds those forced to seek protection internationally. While traditional refugee camps still provide shelter to millions of refugees, many also those end up destitute in urban areas. Children are now more likely to be involved in armed conflicts, and migrants of all types to be detained for crossing borders in search of protection or a better life”, said Fr Lluís Magriñà, JRS International Director.

From our humble beginnings in South East Asia, JRS is now present in 53 countries. Our mission to accompany, serve and advocate the cause of our displaced brothers and sisters in an uncaring world has made a difference to millions, for which we must thank the Lord. Our experience has taught us that we need not only to be strong, but we need to work in teams and harness the strength of the many refugees with whom we collaborate, and we must always be available to respond to meet the needs of the forgotten wherever they may be.

“While remaining faithful to its original vision, JRS, in consultation with forcibly displaced persons, has developed advocacy, communications and programme strategies to serve the most forgotten in places ignored by governments, NGOs and the mass media. This work has been crucial. However, in the next 25 years we must double our efforts to address the causes of forced migration and to ensure that the need to provide protection to refugees is never questioned”, added Fr Magriñà.

Notes

JRS manages programmes in 53 countries around the world, with contact persons in other 20 countries. It employs more than 1,000 staff – lay, Jesuit and other religious, to meet the needs of over 450,000 refugees and IDPs with the specialisations it has developed in education for refugees and in particular types of pastoral care.

For more information:

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