

March 07, 2016



EDUCATION - Coinciding with the [Jubilee Year of Mercy](#), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has launched the Mercy in Motion campaign to support the JRS Global Education Initiative, a worldwide effort by JRS to expand educational programs to refugees and forcibly displaced persons. The goal of the initiative is to double the number of people served in its educational projects to more than 220,000 by the year 2020.

Jesuit Refugee Service International Director Fr. Thomas Smolich, SJ, notes that refugees “sometimes spend many years in camps, sometimes they’re able to go back home, sometimes they wind up being resettled in countries near and far. What they can always take with them is an education; it’s an intangible skill, an intangible asset, which allows them to make a better life and a better contribution wherever they might wind up.”

Mercy in Motion reflects the words of Pope Francis: “Mercy is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality ... We are called to look beyond, to focus on the heart to see how much generosity everyone is capable of.”

“Accompaniment is being present to people and really trying to understand their hearts,” said JRS Cambodia Country Director Sr. Denise Coghlan, RSM. “Deep down it’s understanding each person that we meet as a person of dignity. The JRS message is really about creating

communities of love.”

For 35 years, JRS has focused on education as a means to build peace and foster the development of more resilient and cohesive societies. During an audience last November with refugees and JRS staff, Pope Francis said “to give a child a seat at school is the finest gift you can give.”

Inspired by the pope’s mandate, JRS teams in cities and refugee camps around the world will strengthen and expand existing educational programs and make sure the potential of thousands of refugee children and young adults is not wasted.

“As Pope Francis has spoken about the Year of Mercy, what I draw from it is asking us to extend the hand of the church to those most in need. That’s what JRS is fundamentally all about,” said Fr. Smolich. “We really believe education is something which transforms people and communities.”

JRS views education as a life-saving intervention. Even during emergencies when most agencies are focused on the provision of humanitarian assistance, JRS is also organizing educational and recreational activities as a tool of trauma healing and promoting psychosocial well-being. It is a way of bringing a sense of normality to the lives of children and youth, and the lasting impact of education nurtures individual growth and empowerment and promotes long-term, durable solutions to communities in conflict.

Source: jesuits.org, February 15, 2016