

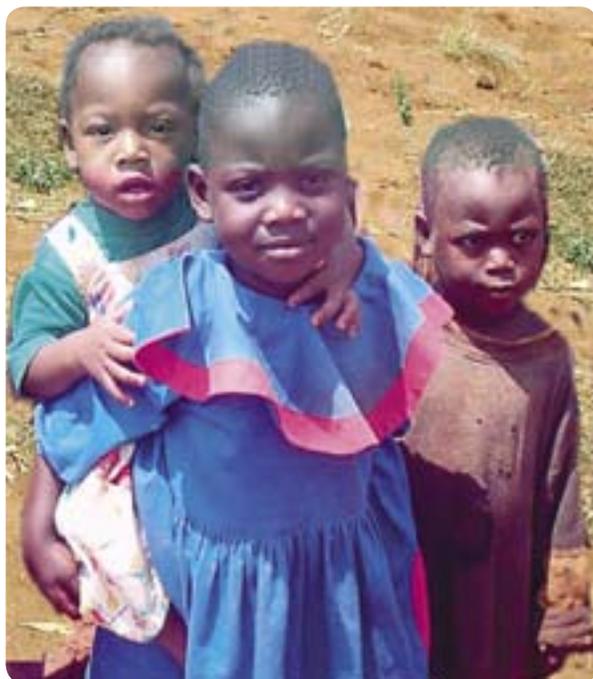
Light and Shadows in JRS EA 2006

Burundi and South Sudan saw great progress towards permanent peace in 2006. Many refugees have returned to their homes from Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. Some internally displaced persons have moved back from as far away as Khartoum to their homes in South Sudan. They are beginning to rebuild their houses, cultivate their fields and re-build the local communities. The ongoing peace talks in Juba, S. Sudan between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda are leading to great hopes for a permanent peace for the people of Northern Uganda.

Travel has become more secure and more widespread in the roads of N. Uganda and S. Sudan. Our teams can travel in safety while at the same time with caution given the evolving security situation.

“**Our hopes for 2007 are that stability is maintained in South Sudan and Burundi and that renewed dialogue can bring about real peace in Somalia and Darfur.**”

The conflict in Darfur is indeed a cause of deep distress for JRS and above all for the suffering people of this part of Western Sudan. Over two million people have been affected due to this ongoing conflict. Persistent efforts by the international community to intervene with UN controlled peace keepers have been obstructed. At the end of 2006, the people of Somalia have again been disturbed by new outbreaks of fighting and



almost 100,000 refugees have fled to Kenya in the past months.

Our hopes for 2007 are that stability is maintained in South Sudan and Burundi and that renewed dialogue can bring about real peace in Somalia and Darfur.

In JRS EA a new strategic plan for 2007-2010 was launched. This plan marks out the program priorities of JRS' engagement over the next number of years. As we complete the year 2006 it is a time to give thanks for all the blessings we have received from one another and from our Almighty. As we move forward into 2007 we pray and work for a more peaceful world.

By Fr. John Guiney, SJ - Regional Director



BURUNDI: Hopes For Lasting Peace

After successful peace talks brokered by prominent African leaders in Dar es Salaam and Pretoria, the different rebel groups in Burundi, with the exception of FNL, signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the transitory government of President Domitien Ndayizigiye in Dar es Salaam on November 16, 2004. This historic event led to a series of elections, namely, Communal elections on 5th June 2005, Parliamentary elections on 4th July 2005, and Presidential elections on 19th August 2005.

Palipehutu-FNL, the last rebel group finally signed the long-awaited Peace Agreement with the government on September 7, 2006. The International community commended the Govern-

ment of Tanzania for bringing the two parties to the negotiation table, and for creating an environment that led to a successful conclusion of the peace talks.

In view of the positive political development in Burundi, UNHCR consequently launched voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees on June 20, 2006. Many responded positively to this campaign and according to the UNHCR September 2006 Voluntary Repatriation Report, 23,199 refugees were voluntarily repatriated to

Burundi from January to September, with 19,567 repatriated between June and September.

Nevertheless, a good number remain undecided to go home. One refugee from Mtabila Camp

“We often say, ‘there is no place like home’. However, home is where people live in their own property.”

BURUNDI: Hopes For Lasting Peace (contd...)

said, “We are happy that FNL agreed to lay down weapons. We are eagerly waiting to see the outcome of the agreement with the hope that the peace will last and we can return home.”

Put differently, promoting repatriation is perhaps easier said than done. We often say, ‘there is no place like home’. However, home is where people live in their own property, toil their own land and live in peace and in security.

The majority of the Burundian refugees have been away for more than a decade some others for up to three decades. While there is euphoria, it is also understandable that there is a feeling of uncertainty.

However, if there is a good political will on all sides, Burundi will experience a durable and lasting peace.

By Fr. Romy Cagatin, SVD-Country Director (Tanzania)

SOUTH SUDAN: Returning Home

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, UNHCR estimates that 86,689 returnees have arrived in Southern Sudan from neighboring countries. Of these, 13,632 were Assisted Voluntary Returns and 73,057 were Spontaneous Returns with the majority coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Uganda. In the first 9 months of 2006, 13,420 refugees returned as part of the Assisted Voluntary Repatriation programme.

The main areas of return include Kajokeji, Morobo and Yei counties where JRS has a significant presence. However, the rate of return to Magwi County in Eastern Equatoria has been much slower because of insecurity, which remains the biggest impediment to refugees returning to their homes. The Cessation of Hostilities in Northern Uganda, mediated by the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) in Juba in July 2006, was received with a mixture of optimism and skepticism.

Since then, frequent breakdowns in the talks and continued attacks despite an agreement that the rebels should be confined to two assembly points

in Owiny-Kibul and Ri-kwangba for the duration of the talks has undermined the hope that a peaceful solution can be found. Arrest warrants for the organizations’ leaders issued by the International Criminal Court are still outstanding. Despite the intention of many of those displaced to return to their places of origin, many cite poor basic services as a prerequisite to them returning. JRS is continuing to work with communities and the authorities in South Sudan to bridge the gap in the provision of quality basic education to create the conditions that will enable returnees to receive a comparable standard of education. Disparities between the education offered in, Uganda and South Sudan are likely to persist in the short-term however.

Information sharing is key to enabling individuals and families to decide freely when and to which areas they choose to return. JRS has a key role to play in disseminating accurate information across borders through its network of community leaders and as part of its pastoral accompaniment of refugees.

By Rob Ashing-Projects Coordinator (Southern Sudan)

ETHIOPIA:

Highlight of 2006

Most refugee survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) never get an opportunity to take a HIV test, obtain medical treatment or even talk about what they have gone through. In response to this, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) organized a 2-day workshop in December 2005, to promote a common understanding of SGBV.

Subsequently, JRS Ethiopia advocacy staff organized internal workshops/ discussions for staff in daily contact with refugees, to help raise their awareness of SGBV and to ensure that survivors get the required assistance and/or are referred to where they can get the help they need.

“ Staff working in the programme have noted that more and more beneficiaries, especially of women from the Democratic Republic of Congo, experience various forms of SGBV mostly perpetrated by soldiers. ”

In early 2006, a Multi- Agency taskforce held regular meetings and an agreement was signed to promote the prevention of SGBV and to provide services to survivors. Appropriate medical and psychological treatment centers and legal agencies were identified and a referral system was established. Given its day-to-day direct contact with refugees, JRS was identified to focus on raising awareness of these issues among refugees and providing limited counseling and psychosocial support. The staff at the center also undertook the role of referring refugees in need of medical and psycho-

logical services to UNHCR and its other implementing partners.

Though not established with the objective of assisting the survivors of SGBV, staff working for the JRS Refugee Community Center and the Emergency Needs Programmes have found themselves in daily contact with the survivors of sexual violence.

“ JRS staff undertake screening interviews and daily home visits to ascertain the background and current situation of the beneficiaries. ”

The JRS-Emergency Needs Programme caters for asylum seekers who have yet to be admitted to the refugee determination procedure. JRS staffs undertake screening interviews and daily home visits to ascertain the background and current situation of the beneficiaries. Those deemed to be in need, receive (emergency) financial assistance based on their family size. When they are sick, they are also referred to St Raphael health clinic.

In the past, these interviews and home visits have been helpful in identifying survivors of SGBV. Staffs working in the programme have noted that more and more beneficiaries, especially of women from the Democratic Republic of Congo, experience various forms of SGBV mostly perpetrated by soldiers. Somali women and girls also represent a particularly vulnerable group to SGBV, especially among those who come from southern Somalia. Consequently, JRS staff pay particular attention when undertaking interviews with women from central African countries and Somalia.

Reflections on Tumultuous Darfur

It is with a sense of privilege that JRS works in Darfur. It is a privilege to have gained and to continue to have permission to operate in an environment that is tightly bureaucratized and controlled. It is a privilege to be serving the displaced people of North Darfur and to be providing hope filled education in the largest humanitarian crisis in the world.

Darfur would call 2006 tumultuous. New displacements, limited humanitarian access, an unrepresentative peace agreement, a struggling AU force, the ongoing call for UN peacekeepers, unsettled IDP camps, increased insecurity, new displacements, and disagreement among the members of the Government of National Unity on the way forward.

Darfur would call 2006 political. On The 5th May the government and one of the factions signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). As the agreement did not encompass all the actors it does not have widespread support on the ground. It has in fact done little more than realign the war. The AU, in their second mission has a mandate that is proving challenging and limited in its aim of civilian protection.

It has been confirmed that the AU mandate is to be extended for another 6 months to end of June 2007. AMIS, its umbrella, is perceived as not being neutral. The question of UN peacekeepers continues with growing international pressure and diplomacy, the Sudanese government continues to adamantly refuse its entry.

Darfur would call 2006 insecure. Following the DPA, some of the disgruntled factions that did



not sign coalesced and since their inception have been warring with the government. This has created further displacement through the bombing of villages, increased the security risks and expanded the no go areas for humanitarian workers as parties go on 'shopping sprees', particularly for vehicles. The government has continued to use military means after a political solution through the DPA had been brokered. Camps across Darfur have increasing violence levels and armed groups are expanding. The enforced recruitment of child soldiers is on the increase. Civilian bearing of arms has increased with arms being channeled to specific groups.

Darfur would call 2006 a time of need. During the middle of the year limited access due to insecurity has meant that at the worst period 40% of Darfur was not receiving humanitarian assistance. Trade

and agriculture have been severely affected by the conflict. Demographics are altered due to the large-scale movements to urban centers. The rainy season was short and limited. Many of the 3 million displaced are entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance.

Within this context we have our emergent JRS programme. Engaging in adult education and teacher training of IDPs who have settled in Mellit. Mellit historically is a trading town that bustled with business coming from Libya. Since the conflict began in 2003 the trading has ceased and the population swelled with fleeing people from the surrounding areas. Mellit is one of the few areas of North Darfur that has remained relatively secure during 2006. JRS began programme operations in Mellit at the beginning of this year. People have found the education to be a source of hope and encouragement in an environment

where it is difficult to clearly see a path to peace. As one of the adult educators says: “ The work carries on smoothly, with the coordinator doing her best and providing all the needs. In fact she changed the attitude of the women towards education. Now nearly all students can read and write, which can be attributed to the great efforts done in raising awareness amongst students.”

This opinion is echoed by another Adult Educator with JRS Darfur in the following words;“ The students have a real desire to education and are aspiring to reach their goals.”

JRS will continue and expand this privileged work in Darfur. We hold hope for the people of Darfur that 2007 will be a year of solid and positive political decisions, improved security and the ability to provide for their own needs.

By Elaine Jepsen-Project Director (Darfur)

... Another step on the road to **Freedom!!!**

The peace talks in Juba are yet another big step taken on the road to freedom. The road seems long but the peace -talks have made the journey seem lighter and has given hope of a better tomorrow.

The Comprehensive Peace agreement between Uganda and the LRA will bring back long awaited peace, and harmony in northern Uganda. It is the wish of every peace-loving Ugandan and other East Africans and the world itself, that sustainable peace is realized in the north.

The peace talks have provided an opportunity to attain peace through non-violence and enable people to go back to where they belong and to rebuild their lives. However, the challenge to do so is quite enormous as security, democracy and



... Another step on the road to freedom (contd...)



resettlement seems to be the need of the hour. This journey to freedom will entail a striving towards the spirit of justice and reconciliation.

At the same time we need not forget as someone has rightly said that peace is not the absence of justice and truth. The LRA's demand for total peace is dropping charges against its leaders on all the hideous crimes that they have committed against humanity.

How does one come to peace in such terms at the same time not ignoring justice? Restorative Justice, or what is commonly known as alternative justice, is a system employed to administer justice mainly in post conflict situations where there are many victims. This kind of justice in Acholi is called Mato Oput, which allows communities to manage conflict resolution in what are called peace-making circles.

Mato Oput brings about healing, rehabilitation and reduces the prospect of re-offending. Restorative Justice in this context is about restoring harmony to the family and community. It provides a healing circle, which brings parties that have been affected by an incident face to face to air out their concerns. The offender can hear and see the pain that he or she has caused. Given the magnitude of the war in the north where many including children were implicated in the mass murder, rape,

abductions, restorative / alternative justice seems to be the only effective and lasting option. Hence, the Government and all involved in the Peace Process need to forget their mutual insecurities and selfish interest and must be ready to listen to any reforms coming from the people and accept all that will bring lasting, holistic peace to families and communities.

As Christmas approaches, it's a real challenge for us to forgive and forget all the scars and look towards the Star that will lead us to "Bethlehem". And like the Three Kings who walked the journey of freedom by following the Star, never once losing focus, let us pray for all who are involved in this Peace Process, the decision makers and those affected by it, that while the conflicts, doubts and the continue to reign, they may not lose focus and keep their eyes on the Star of Peace, Freedom, Justice and Truth, which will guide them to do all that it takes to be part of a new beginning.

*Star of Peace, Star of Light,
Star of Justice, Freedom and the Right
West ward Leading, Still Proceeding
Guide us to thy Perfect Light.*

By Aden Raj- Country Director (Uganda)



JRS Kenya Plans for 2007

Year 2006 has been a year of mixed blessings for JRS Kenya. With some Sudanese refugees repatriating from the Kakuma refugee camp, JRS Kenya has had the unique fortune of celebrating with them the joy of going back home, while mourning the loss of some of those who have been incentive staff in the different projects.

In light of the on going repatriations, the social services programme has now embarked on a greater de-institutionalization of services. This will involve the community, and in particular, guardians of children who are mentally challenged more proactively in their care & management at home. It is envisioned that this will best prepare the affected refugees for their return home, where institutions for their care are definitely not available.

“ In light of the on going repatriations, the social services programme has now embarked on a greater de-institutionalization of services. ”

With the JRS Eastern Africa 2007-2010 Strategic Plan emphasis on Gender Affirmative Action/ Women Empowerment, more women are set to benefit from the scholarship programme. 50% of all students to be awarded scholarships will be women. In addition, emphasis will be on short vo-

ational courses such as, training in agriculture, engineering, community development and medical training, which have a direct positive effect on the community upon their return home.

“ The programme has now adopted a short-term ‘emergency’ focus whereby asylum seekers will be assisted for a shorter period of time. ”

For 2007, the RSD (Refugee Status Determination) process effected by UNHCR is expected to be shortened to between 9-12 months. In the past it has been taking up to 3 years, a fact that has had a lot of bearing on the work of the Parish Outreach Programme.

The programme has now adopted a short-term ‘emergency’ focus whereby asylum seekers will be assisted for a shorter period of time. Although this is not good news for some refugees, it will ensure that a greater number of asylum seekers benefit from the Programme, self-reliance is promoted and a culture of over dependence on JRS support is not created.

By Anne Wangari-Country Coordinator (Kenya)

PROGRAMS:

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Others, with a wider or narrower perspective and experience, will write about the contextual changes in the Eastern African Region and how it has impacted upon the lives of people, and the work we do on the ground.

Writing from the perspective of a Regional Programmes Officer based in Nairobi, but with the privilege of traveling out to the field in support of the work and people there, 2006 was an incredible dynamic and busy year. It opened with a flurry of activity around annual report and annual audit preparations and general planning, and only gathered pace since then.

New staff from far and wide – internationals, locals and refugees joined projects in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan. A Strategic planning process, a first for JRS Eastern Africa that had its roots back in mid 2004, drew to a close with the production of a Regional Strategic plan. Year 2007 project proposals prepared in October bear witness to the practical application of this planning, and the significant shifts in JRS strategic areas of focus for the next 4 years.

Three external project evaluations took place in Kenya leading to negotiated shifts in focus, linked to the changing needs of refugees and our responsibility towards them. This comes at a time of rehabilitation and reconstruction in a number of countries of origin currently.

Preparatory work, including setting workable terms of reference, then reaching agreement on the when and how of implementing key recommendations is never easy. The process is ongoing and is wholly dependent on the continued commitment of the people involved. It has been a learning process, those involved should justifiably be proud of their input. In Ethiopia, the working environment remains difficult. An important

review of key projects in the light of contextual changes in country and within the wider region took place with the full co-operation and input of the JRS Ethiopia team. Increased sustainability, impact and cost effectiveness are ongoing areas of focus.

Exit strategy development was a priority in 2006. Specific planning took place in Tanzanian and Ugandan projects. A reasonable lead in to exit is critical if the respect due to JRS staff, locals and displaced people with whom we work is to be accorded.

“ **JRS Eastern Africa is currently, and will continue to document our experiences with exit, to share with other JRS Regions globally and our partners.** ”

The creation of a timeline also allows for planning and helps ensure ultimately, that the achievements recorded during the lifetime of the project are not negated by a rushed and ill thought out exit. Not all are convinced of the merits or practicality of writing a framework for exit into project plans from the outset. Nevertheless, work continues and will continue into 2007 to look more carefully at strategies for exit for all JRS interventions across the region – to ensure sustainability and increase focus. JRS Eastern Africa is currently, and will continue to document our experiences with exit, to share with other JRS Regions globally and our partners.

Newer projects continued to develop in a measured way in accordance with various quality as-

ETHIOPIA: Highlight of 2006 (contd...)

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SGBV survivors, who have been accepted into the asylum determination process or have been recognized as refugees, are referred to UNHCR or its implementing partners and are provided with medical, psychological and other treatment as needed. Those who have yet to be admitted to the refugee determination procedure or whose applications have been rejected however, are not entitled to such assistance.

When such cases are identified, the programme staff send them (accompanied by a JRS staff member) to the MMM (Medical Missionaries of Mary) Sisters Health center where they receive HIV, pregnancy and other tests, as well as counseling.

The JRS-Refugee Community Center, caters for recognized urban refugees and apart from counseling, child care, library, internet and recreational

services available at Center, the beneficiaries participate in workshops on HIV/AIDS awareness, family planning and harmful traditional practices.

Although there are a lot of events in Addis Ababa to raise public awareness on these issues, refugees are often unable to avail themselves of them, as they usually do not understand Amharic, the Ethiopian national language. Therefore to overcome this barrier, this year with UNHCR, JRS is planning to use these workshops to raise awareness among the urban refugees on issues related to SGBV.

Although there are still gaps in the service provision for the survivors of SGBV, the current level of cooperation between service providers marks a positive step in the right direction.

By Seyoum Asfaw-Country Director (Ethiopia)

PROGRAMS: Looking Back, Looking Forward (contd...)

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insurance mechanisms developed and borrowed from the experiences of others. This is true even in Darfur where no elaboration of the horrors and difficulties of that situation is required here. Specific thematic trainings, internal audits, prolific field visits by Country and Regional finance, programmes, advocacy, personnel and logistical support staff took place in 2006 in support of the work on the ground.

Funding partners visited projects, and shared with JRS their appreciation, observations and constructive comments for enhancing our efforts into the future. An important conference on Ethical Responsibilities co-hosted by JRS and CRS facilitated open discussion on key issues affecting displaced persons drawing together academics and refugees in so doing. Preparations are also in train to work with others to input on issues causing and affecting the displaced into the World

Social Forum to be held in Nairobi in 2007.

Achievements of JRS in this region over the years could not have been attained without background support from the JRS International Office. Nor, could it have been achieved without the tireless efforts of the JRS Africa Education Resource Person in seeking always to share better and different approaches to the work.

The openness and pro-activity of Country Directors and Co-ordinators in using these resources, negotiating and working with project teams to implement changes on the ground amidst a host of practical day-to-day challenges was indispensable. Structural and procedural changes, initiatives for new interventions, planning for exit, support for an increased focus on quality of programmes all came from the JRS Eastern Africa Regional Director and was equally indispensable.



Christmas, A time to be Grateful

As our preparation for Christmas draws to a close, we are reminded once again of the coming of Christ into our midst as a human being, not in the splendor befitting a king but in the helplessness and dependency of a tiny child. This child was to turn hatred into love for so many and is himself the Prince of peace. Christmas reminds us that our wealth lies not in our possessions or power, but in our ability to share who and what we are with each other. It is a time not only for giving and receiving gifts but also for being grateful for all we receive daily, both from God and from each other.

Here in the Eastern Africa Region of JRS, we thank God especially for those of our refugee sisters and brothers, who throughout the past year had the joy of returning to their homeland, others have gone to foreign lands for resettlement and others continue to wait in hope. May we all celebrate the birth of Christ in peace and love. It is a time to thank all our personnel for their dedication and services throughout the year, and to rejoice in what has happened in all our projects. We are conscious that many are still suffering deprivation and injustices in our midst, and we continue to work to effect change. We rejoice in the generosity of our staff, who serve, accompany and advocate, but who do so lovingly and tirelessly so

that others may live life to the full. Throughout the past year 2 new projects were established, one in Kasulu an extension of Radio Kwizera, and one in Kitgum – North Uganda, with local and international staff in both. Side by side with this, some projects have downsized and may close in 2007-2008 due to the return of refugees to their homeland. We have welcomed many new personnel, and said farewell to others as contracts begin and others end. All this is a sign of life.

We wish to extend our gratitude to one and all who have made it possible for us to serve, to those visitors who shared in our lives throughout the year, and to those who by their expertise and experience have helped us improve our service. May we take this opportunity of wishing each one a peaceful, joyful and blessed Christmas and a new year filled with hope.

Many staff throughout the region have had the joy of welcoming new family members, to you we send our congratulations. To those who were bereaved during the year, Christmas is a time when we remember you and your loved ones in our prayer. Let us all rejoice in the birth of our Saviour.

By Bernadette Mangan LSA (Personnel Director)

Lastly, and most importantly, much credit for the achievements of this year goes to the displaced with whom we work. Often, the biggest achievements are the simplest. We are all, these days obliged to work with indicators and rigid measurements of success.

A word of encouragement or reproach from a refugee in response to JRS services is often the most important indicator of impact however. Only by working in close co-operation with the people we are serving can we hope to decipher real achievements from the perceived and from failures. If I have one hope for JRS Eastern Africa for 2007, it is that through our interventions, displaced populations will come to know and feel the true meaning of empowerment.

Huge attention is focused these days on informing displaced and others of their rights. It sometimes seems these efforts are not always matched by conveying also a sense of responsibility – individual and collective.

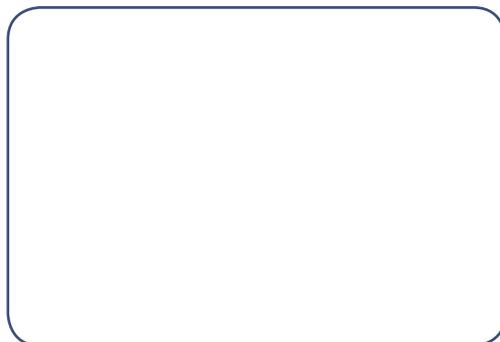
The displaced with whom we work cannot feel that sense of empowerment if they are not actively and proactively involved in all stages of intervention, until in fact, they become the ones to drive that intervention.

This is a fervent wish for lasting peace and reconciliation is my wish for JRS and the Eastern Africa Region in 2007.

By Noelle Fitzpatrick, JRSEA Programs Officer

We wish all our readers a Very

Merry Christmas



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