

# Jesuit Refugee Service launches “mercy in motion” campaign in India

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Students enact sri Lankan refugee problems

increasing number of refugees in the world.

Chennai: The South Asian unit of the Jesuit Refugee Service has launched a campaign to spread the message of mercy toward refugees.

The campaign began with an exhibition of photos and videos on June 20, the World Refugee Day, at Loyola College, 82-year-old educational institution in Chennai.

College rector Jesuit Father Francis Jayapathy who opened the exhibition, said it would spread social and human values among students. He also stressed the need for educating the world about the plight of the

Father Stan Fernandes, regional director of Jesuit Refugee Service South Asia (JRS-SA), said around 60 photos with suitable captions and documentary films not only depicted the plight of refugees but also highlighted “education for transformation.”

The Jesuit social activist who has worked among displaced people in the eastern Indian region of Chotanagpur said the ‘Mercy in Motion’ campaign aims to create “awareness” among students about the problems faced by millions of people who have become refugees because of war and internal conflicts. He said the JRS plans to take the ongoing “Mercy in Motion” campaign to all Jesuit colleges in India in coming months.

The exhibition covered JRS works in Afghanistan, African countries, India, Middle East and Sri Lanka.

A press release from JRS International Director Tom Smolich says the World Refugee Day this year reminds people to provide refugees not only a safe place to stay, but also opportunities to grow and contribute to society.

“As human beings, we are at the mercy of nature, at the mercy of governments, at the mercy of leaders, at the mercy of war. We are at the mercy of forces beyond our control. These forces have caused an unprecedented 60 million people – mothers, fathers, sisters and children – to flee their homes,” the press release lamented.

The Chennai exhibition was jointly organized by the JRS –SA and Loyola Institute of Social Sciences Training and Research under the guidance of Dr. Bernad De Sami, a noted social scientist.

Loyola College principal Father Arockisamy Xavier said his institution was “truly blessed” to host this photo exhibition. “Refugees in motion eventually must stop, and when they do, they change and there will be no refugees in future,” he asserted.

The organizers also arranged a panel discussion that showcased different situations of refugees. Father Fernandes presented “an overview of refugees in South Asia.” His paper urged everyone to “come together and mobilize our compassion to make a globalised difference.”

The panel discussion ended with a street play by Loyola Student Support System, depicting the problems of the Sri Lankan refugees.

It certainly created “compassion of heart and mind,” said Ravi, one of the students. He also said the photo exhibition and video films “captured eyes of students.”

The JRS was founded Jesuit superior general Fr. Pedro Arrupe, who responded to the plight of Vietnamese boat people in 1980. He commissioned a four-member pioneer team for the service of Vietnamese. One of them is late Fr. Cyriac of Madurai Jesuit province who was buried in the Loyola campus. The non-profit organization is based at Rome. It serves 724, 551 refugees in around 50 countries at the last count.

Pope Francis declared 2016 as the Jubilee Year of Mercy and JRS responded with the “Mercy in Motion” campaign to help 100,000 more young refugees to get an education. Pope Francis gave his blessings to the campaign on November 14, 2015.

The Pope commended the JRS initiative saying, “Your global education initiative, with its motto Mercy in Motion, will help you reach many other students who urgently need an education that can keep them safe.”

JRS now funds the education of 120,000 students. By 2020, it plans to reach out to 220,000 students.

According to UNHCR, around 60 million refugees and forcibly displaced persons in the world look for “safety and security.”