

Walk a Mile in My Shoes Identity Cards

The following identity cards feature the stories of people from across the globe that JRS has accompanied and served. Thank you for respectfully listening to their stories and keeping them in your thoughts as you complete this exercise.

JRS ASIA PACIFIC

Name: Danh

Age: 21

Country of Origin: Vietnam

Current Location: Bangkok, Thailand



Danh is a differently abled refugee who fled Vietnam and has temporarily resettled as an urban refugee in Thailand. Like many refugees in Thailand, Danh does not have documents, and Thailand does not provide legal status to refugees. This makes securing any sort of formal education difficult and creates a sense of constant fear of arrest. Nevertheless, in 2018, Danh graduated from language and skills training courses run through the JRS Urban Education Project. Now, Danh is driven to help other students by continuing as an aid in the school.

To Learn More About
Dahn's Story

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Name: Shaista

Country of Origin: Pakistan

Current Location: Bangkok, Thailand



Shaista fled Pakistan with her husband and two teenage children after prolonged persecution due to their Christian faith. They finally fled when one of Shaista's relatives was murdered. Now, they live in an apartment in Bangkok, Thailand, where they are not allowed to resume their professional careers due to lack of official Thai status. The family lives under intense stress, as Thailand does not recognize refugees and there is a constant threat of imprisonment and deportation. Shaista's entire family, including the children, stay in the apartment all day, every day.

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Shaista's Story

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Name: Keyhan

Country of Origin: Afghanistan

Current Location: Australia



Keyhan is a member of the persecuted Hazara ethnic group in Afghanistan, and persecution because of his ethnicity required him to flee. He took a small fishing boat with 12 other people to an island in Indonesia. From there, he attempted to cross the ocean into Australia, but was caught and detained by Indonesian authorities, where he stayed in detention for over one year. Upon release, he was sent to Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where he remained for months until his refugee application to Australia was accepted.

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Keyhan's Story

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EASTERN AFRICA

Name: Aron
Country of Origin: Eritrea
Current Location: Ethiopia



Aron fled Eritrea, a small country in northeast Africa, in order to escape forced and indefinite conscription in the military. Eritrea has no freedom of speech and resisting military service can result in imprisonment, torture, and execution. Aron's family remains in Eritrea and is heavily reliant on Aron's support. Aron now works for JRS in Ethiopia, where he helps assist the many refugees that continue to resettle throughout Ethiopia.

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Aron's Story
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Name: Lual
Age: 37
Country of Origin: South Sudan
Current Location: USA



Lual was born a refugee. His mother gave birth to him while fleeing to Uganda from South Sudan, where the violence was constant and brutal. In the Mungula settlement area, he began to go to school and developed a passion for computers. While school and technology were helpful mental escapes, violence continued to surround Lual. In Mungula, schoolchildren, in their bright yellow shirts, would have to hide in foxholes to avoid being spotted by roaming helicopters targeting civilians. In 2005, his family left for the Imvepi Refugee Settlement and after Lual finished secondary school in 2009, he began to commute back and forth from South Sudan and started a business. In 2016, he had to flee again due to violence, but his passion for giving back to his community never faltered.

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Lual's Story
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Name: Basamat
Country of Origin: Sudan
Current Location: Doro Camp, South Sudan



In 2011, Basamat walked for several months with her mother and five sisters before she reached the safety of the camp. Her father did not like girls, saying that he needed a boy because girls are useless. Determined to prove him wrong, Basamat defied the odds to receive an education in the camp. In Doro Camp, there are only 7 schools for a population of over 50,000 people, yet Basamat is working hard to provide for her family and build a future for herself.

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Basamat's Story
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EUROPE

Name: Benjamin
Country of Origin: Iran
Current Location: France



Benjamin was a journalist in Iran before he was imprisoned for speaking out against the government. While in prison, he was tortured and sentenced to death. His father sold their house in order to pay a bribe to secure Benjamin's release. Benjamin then paid a smuggler and fled to Denmark. Due to a previous French tourist visa, the government in Denmark sent him to France to apply for asylum due to the **Dublin Regulations**, which dictate that you must apply for asylum where you first enter the EU. Once in France, the French government tried to send him back to Denmark. In France, though he received refugee status, his lack of proper and formal documentation made it difficult for him to secure a job, and he slept on the streets for months.

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Benjamin's Story

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Name: Huong
Age: 30
Country of Origin: Vietnam
Current Location: Malta



Huong is a survivor of human labor trafficking. Upon arriving in Malta, he was promised a job that would pay standard Maltese wages. Instead, his employers stole his documents and made him sew and press clothes seven days a week for fourteen hours a day. His employers only gave him 150 euros every two weeks, and he was constantly threatened with deportation. His debt in Vietnam (which included the over 3,600 euros he paid to get to Malta) weighed heavily on him, so he attempted to escape. Huong was apprehended by immigration authorities and detained, where he was finally able to talk with someone about his rights.

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Huong's Story

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Name: Darya
Age: 29
Country of Origin: Kabul, Afghanistan
Current Location: Athens, Greece



Darya worked as a journalist for local NGOs that worked with refugees in Kabul. As she was an educated woman, she received threats from the Taliban, as "the Taliban do not want women to study or work." After fleeing with her husband to Turkey, she tried two separate times to make her way to Greece, first by car, then packed into a boat with 60 other people. At the Greek border, guards slapped her, shouted at her, and robbed her. She was made to stay in a refugee camp in Chios, Greece.

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Darya's Story

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GREAT LAKES AFRICA

Name: Swavis Nzeyimana
Age: 22
Country of Origin: Tanzania
Current Location: Burundi



Swavis spent much of her life in a refugee camp in Tanzania. While there, her father denied her the opportunity to go to school. Instead, she watched her brothers receive an education as she was forced to do household chores. Now, as a 22-year-old mother with two children who are five years old and seven months old, she is attending educational classes run by JRS. Her husband, Fidel, supports her fully, and her confidence is soaring. Her education is allowing her to create a better life for herself and her family.

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Swavis's Story
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Name: Makuu
Country of Origin: Democratic Republic of Congo
Current Location: IDP Camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo



Makuu was born in an Internally Displaced Person Camp in the DRC. The DRC is ravaged by armed conflict and war. The violence has forced more than two and half million people to flee their homes and contributed to one of the worst humanitarian crises since World War II. Makuu was born without any arms, but with the support of her parents, teachers, and friends, she has learned to write with her feet and continues to pursue an education.

To Learn More About
Makuu's Story
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LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

Name: Rafael

Age: 30

Country of Origin: Portuguesa, Venezuela

Current Location: Quito, Ecuador



Rafael first left his family in Venezuela and traveled to Bogotá, Colombia in search of work, where he slept on the streets. Soon after, his wife Yorbelys and their two sons came too. They had to sneak across the border because their sons were not able to get passports in Venezuela. In Bogotá, they faced abject discrimination and needed to sell most of their possessions to pay for lodging in a hotel because no one would rent to them. This forced them to move again, hoping to find refuge in Quito, Ecuador.

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Rafael's Story

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Name: Estefani

Country of Origin: Venezuela

Current Location: Ecuador



Estefani and her partner left Venezuela because there was no prenatal care for her or her baby. The economy was collapsing, there were no doctors, and no spaces in any hospitals. They left with hopes to reach Peru, then found themselves attempting to cross Colombia on foot with the millions of other Venezuelans who were fleeing due to economic and political uncertainty and tension. When they reached Ecuador, Estefani remained there while her partner continued to Peru for a work commitment. Alone in Ecuador, Estefani experienced a heart attack that almost resulted in her losing her baby.

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Estefani's Story

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MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Name: Faheem
Country of Origin: Sudan
Current Location: Amman, Jordan



Faheem and his family fled Sudan after receiving threats due to Faheem's work as a human rights activist. Though they no longer face threats from the Sudanese government, their situation in Jordan is dire. In Jordan, they are not able to obtain work permits, so finding money to use to pay rent and secure food for the family is difficult. Additionally, Faheem's wife is nine months pregnant. In the midst of all these difficulties, Faheem is most grateful that his two older children can be in school. He says, "I have to look for a better future for my children... this is why I am here."

**To Learn More About
Faheem's Story**

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Name: Mohammed
Country of Origin: Syria
Current Location: Jordan



In 2011, Mohammed was a normal student, studying, hanging out with friends, and dreaming about his future. The unrest regarding the Syrian government grew, and protesters held a sit-in in the middle of Mohammed's town. Everything was so quiet, until the sun went down and the government started shooting demonstrators. The next day, the government arrested many of the young men involved in the sit-in. After twelve months of unrest and bombings, Mohammed and his family were forced to flee to Lebanon, where a different set of struggles awaited them.

**To Learn More About
Mohammed's Story**

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Name: Nadia
Age: 8
Country of Origin: Sinjar, Iraq
Current Location: Displacement camp
in Baghouz, eastern Syria



Nadia first fled to Mount Sinjar with her sisters when they were notified of the arrival of ISIS, but they were later caught when they snuck back into town to gather food to survive. Upon capture, she was taken along with other Yazidi women to Mosul and then to Raqqa, Syria, where she was imprisoned. She was later sold to a much older man, and then sold from one man to another. When one of her captors did not return home, she fled to eastern Syria to find refuge with many other Yazidi families.

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Nadia's Story**

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NORTH AMERICA

Name: Ana
Age: 50
Country of Origin: El Salvador
Current Location: Mexico



Ana is a mother of four children and a grandmother to two grandchildren. After her grandson became the target of a gang, she was sent threatening messages to try to force her to give her pension to the gang. Though Ana resisted, her sixteen-year-old grandson was murdered by the gang and her daughter-in-law disappeared and was likely kidnapped and killed. She fled to Guatemala and decided to continue to Mexico, as the same gang was likely to find her in Guatemala as well. She is currently waiting for the Mexican government to process her request for asylum after her case has been mismanaged for more than a year.

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Ana's Story
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Name: David
Country of Origin: Democratic Republic of Congo
Current Location: Ontario, Canada



David fled the DRC in 1996, escaping a conflict that killed millions of people, including four members of his family. For approximately ten years, David tried to survive on his own at the Kakuma refugee camp, where he almost gave up hope. JRS offered David a scholarship to continue his education. After, he was able to travel to Nairobi for work, where he met and married his wife. Later, two of his three daughters were diagnosed with Autism, and his wife was diagnosed with depression. David had to be at home all day in order to care for his family and did not have the money to hire specialists to help them.

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David's Story
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SOUTH ASIA

Name: Rishna

Age: 30

Country of Origin: Sri Lanka

Current Location: Okkur Camp in India



Rishna was only six months old when her family fled for their lives. She grew up without a father, as he was shot by the Sri Lankan Navy when he returned to Sri Lanka to help more family members escape. In the camps, her mother worked three different jobs to keep the family afloat. Rishna was enrolled in JRS education programs from an early age, allowing her to secure a scholarship to complete her secondary education at a government-run school. After engaging in life skills courses, she now helps cover household expenses for her husband and children.

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Rishna's Story

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Name: Nurul

Age: 10

Country of Origin: Myanmar

Current Location: Cox's Bazaar Camp in Bangladesh



Nurul had to flee from his home with his family, including his little sister Afiza, due to the government persecution of the Rohingya people in Myanmar. When Nurul first arrived at the camp, he did not want to play with anyone and relived his trauma daily. He gave up on ever being able to enjoy his childhood and live a happy life.

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Nurul's Story

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Name: Ja Aung

Country of Origin: Myanmar

Current Location: Kachin State, Myanmar



Ja Aung is an Internally Displaced Person in Myanmar due to the constant violence and armed conflict. After graduating from a JRS teaching program three years ago, she has taught mathematics to a variety of students. She faces several challenges as a teacher in a conflict zone, but she relies on the strength and friendliness of her students and their families to survive. Ja Aung's work as a teacher is critical, as over 50% of the people displaced in the Kachin State are children, who need to receive an education in order to thrive.

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Ja Aung's Story

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SOUTHERN AFRICA

Name: Perfect
Age: 20
Country of Origin: Burundi
Current Location: Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi



In 2012, Perfect arrived with her older sister Patience at the Dzaleka Camp after being separated from their parents in Burundi. Alone, the sisters struggled to adapt to life in the camp, especially due to the language barrier. Perfect was scared to go to school without her sister, so she was enrolled alongside Patience in secondary school and began to excel. She received a scholarship in 2017, allowing her to pursue her dream of becoming a social worker.

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Perfect's Story

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Name: Mireille
Country of Origin: Rwanda
Current Location: Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi



Mireille was just two years old when the genocide in Rwanda occurred and she lost her father. From age two to age eight, she spent her life on the run, crossing through the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Angola before finally arriving at the Dzaleka Camp in Malawi at the age of eight with her grandfather and uncle. Everyone else in her family had died or disappeared. While life was difficult in Dzaleka, Mireille excelled at school, which carried her on to a successful future as a medical doctor.

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Mireille's Story

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Name: Molline
Country of Origin: Zimbabwe
Current Location: Johannesburg, South Africa



Molline and her sister Melinda fled from Zimbabwe four years ago. Melinda has paralysis that was brought on by HIV, and Molline is her primary caretaker. There is a limited amount of healthcare and medical treatment that they can access, making their transition to South Africa incredibly difficult. They live with Molline's husband in a small apartment with unstable stairs. Melinda's disease makes it very difficult for either sister to work and establish a new life in South Africa and the two sisters were running out of hope for a better future.

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Molline's Story

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WEST AFRICA

Name: Hiba Abdallah Abou
Country of Origin: Sudan
Current Location: Chad



Hiba Abdallah Abou has been living in Chad for 11 years. While at her home in Sudan, she and her sister were kidnapped by their neighbor and forced to work in a military compound, where they were repeatedly raped and forced to watch heinous murders. After escaping the compound with her sister, they ran back to their mother's house to pick up their children. Their mother decided to remain in Sudan. They were smuggled into the Goz Amir Refugee Camp in Chad, where her sister discovered that she was pregnant as a result of being raped by their captors. While they made it out of Chad alive, neither sister can forget the trauma that they endured, but they are working hard to rebuild a life for their children.

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Hiba's Story
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Name: Noura el Houda
Country of Origin: Sudan
Current Location: Chad



Noura el Houda fled Sudan with her family as a child and grew up in the Am Nabak Refugee Camp in Chad. She has 16 brothers and sisters and her family's finances are strained, which jeopardizes Noura's educational opportunities. After getting pregnant before marriage, her parents attempted to stop her from attending school due to social stigma.

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Noura's Story
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