



Edmund Rice Centre

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

<p>ERC JUSTICE UPDATES December 2018 No.5</p>

Dear All,

Welcome to the 5th Edition of ERC Justice Updates your regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on all sorts of matters relating to social and environmental justice.

REMEMBER WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

Thanks so much for your wonderful feedback, it is really appreciated. Please do send us your feedback or any information you think would be good to include in further updates.

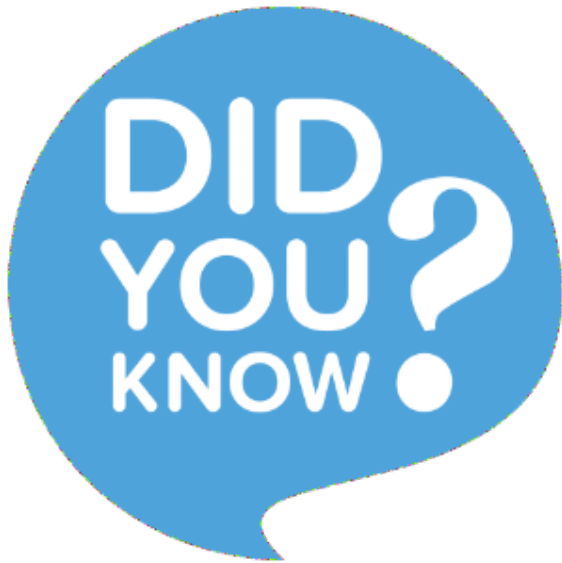
Thanks to all contributors and others here at ERC who have helped me establish the first four editions .

Don't forget to forward Justice Matters onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

Regards

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney



- **On Monday December 10th, the Australian government will have detained men, women & children on Nauru & Manus Island for 1955 DAYS**
- **UNHCR's Global Trends Report found 68.5 million people had been driven from their homes across the world at the end of 2017 (one every 2 seconds).**
- **Jesuit Refugee Service Australia Director Carolina Gottardo.**
“Unfortunately, violence against women and girls is endemic. It affects women seeking asylum in very specific ways as a result of the multiple layers of discrimination that they face on the grounds of their gender, race and migration/asylum status,” <https://jesuit.org.au/jesuit-refugee-service-supporting-vulnerable-refugee-women/>
- **UN IPCC Report: The world’s leading climate scientists have warned there is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.**
- **70th anniversary of the adoption of [United Nations Declaration of Human Rights \(1948\)](#)**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration) is an international document that states basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled.



Pat Dodson says the Indigenous voice proposal prompted debate on what should come first – referendum, legislation or co-design. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

Indigenous voice proposal endorsed by joint parliamentary committee

Lorema Allam, The Guardian

Report recommends design of voice comes before referendum or legislation

The joint parliamentary committee on constitutional reform has released its final report today, endorsing the proposal for an [Indigenous voice to parliament](#) and recommending “a process of co-design” between the government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to work through the detail during the next parliament.

The committee has also recommended the legal form and role of the voice should be determined after this process of co-design, a recommendation that has come in for criticism from some Indigenous people and organisations.

“There has been some quite intense, discussion on what should come first, a referendum, legislation or co-design,” Senator Patrick Dodson said, in tabling the report.

“In some ways this is a matter of political judgement, working through all of the legal consequences that words bring to constitutional consideration to achieve a successful outcome for First Nations peoples and the Australian community.”

The committee also recommends the establishment of a national resting place in Canberra for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unknown remains as a place for commemoration, healing and reflection. Read more:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/29/joint-parliamentary-committee-endorses-indigenous-voice-proposal>



Photo: Soumi Gopalakrishnan fled with her family to Christmas Island. (Supplied: Josephine Booth).

A GOOD NEWS STORY

Re an Edmund Rice educated student, Soumi Gopalakrishnan who attended St. James Flexible Learning Centre in South Brisbane.

Asylum seeker student's university dreams revived after offers flood in

Lily Nothling and Dea Clark

A top year 12 graduate who feared she would never get to attend university because of her asylum seeker status says her dreams are now a reality after being inundated with offers of help and support.

Soumi Gopalakrishnan, 19, was the dux of her inner-city Brisbane school who dreamed of becoming a doctor.

But as a Sri Lankan Tamil who fled her home country with her family four years ago, her prospects of going to university were slim.

Asylum seekers are classed as international full-fee-paying students, meaning they are required to pay the full cost of their university tuition up-front unless offered a rare scholarship.

Since sharing her story with the ABC, Soumi said she had been overwhelmed with messages of support and offers of assistance.

"It was like a dream – my principal called me and said I've got scholarship offers from universities," Soumi said on Friday night.

Among those is an offer from Southern Cross University to cover the entire cost of her tuition.

"I woke up this morning and my life has completely changed ... I can go to university and achieve my dream and then contribute to the Australian community," Soumi said.

"It's just a reminder there are still people out there that care about others."

'Changing one life isn't enough'

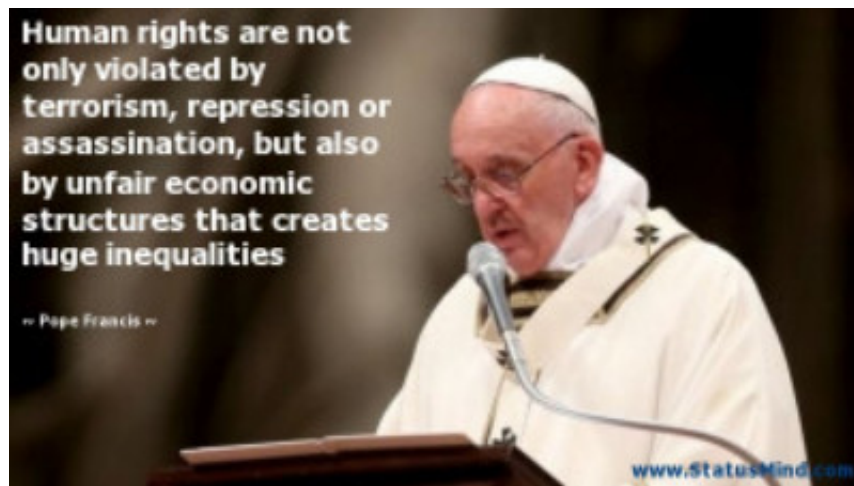
Soumi said she had been humbled by the reaction from other asylum seeker students at her school, St James College.

"I went to school [yesterday] and there were a couple of students who came to me and said 'thank you so much for creating a pathway for us – now we have a road to get to our dreams,'" Soumi said.

"I can get a scholarship, I'm just an individual, but there are so many other students who are in the same position as me.

"Just changing one life isn't enough, I think we need to change others' as well and I'm proud of myself for making all the young students believe there is still a way to reach their goals."

Read more: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-24/asylum-seeker-university-dreams-revived-after-offers-flood-in/10550876>



REFLECTIONS

We are all of us from birth to death guests at a table which we did not spread. The sun, the earth, love, friends, our very breath are parts of this banquet...

Rebecca Harding Davis, 1831-1910, American Author and Journalist

"Deep listening is a special quality of my people that I believe is the most important. It is our most unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. This is the gift that Australians are thirsting for." Aboriginal Elder Miriam Rose Ungunmerr of the Daly River, 2016.

"There are many things that can only be seen through eyes that have cried"

Oscar A. Romero

"Until we learn to love others as ourselves, it's difficult to blame broken people who desperately try to affirm themselves when no one else will."

Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A spirituality for the two halves of life.*

Conflict cannot be ignored or concealed. It has to be faced. But if we remain trapped in conflict, we lose our perspective, our horizons shrink and reality itself begins to fall apart. In the midst of conflict, we lose our sense of the profound unity of reality...

*the message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity. Pope Francis - *Evangelii Guardium*, nn 226, 230, 2013.*



The Day Mercy and Justice Met

A beautiful Reflection by Brother Peter Thrupp cfc

When it's our time to leave this mortal life would we prefer to meet a merciful God or a just God? Well I guess this is what I might call a 'no brainer' as we all are happy to admit our need for God's mercy; yet in our everyday life we so often demand justice, especially if we feel we have been wronged. Mercy and all that it entails does not feature strongly in our thoughts when we are being hurt or unjustly treated. We might ask ourselves, is it possible for human beings to be just and yet merciful when dealing with our neighbour, or is there a need to accept that these are two attributes that in some way are opposed to one another and cannot coexist? I have heard the expression that there is a time for mercy and there is a time for justice and maybe this is the way we should approach this dilemma. Needless to say both are good, so I suspect asking us to choose when we are wronged is always a difficult choice to make and maybe distributing justice mercifully is not in our DNA. Certainly we are told God has both attributes in abundance, but where the dividing line is and how each comes into play and whether one would be at the expense of the other is beyond me to sort out. *Mercy requires us to be compassionate, empathetic and when appropriate forgiving, whereas Justice requires judgment, condemnation and if appropriate, restitution.*

In other words when can we know that it is the time for justice and when is the time to exercise mercy? Is there a time when mercy is finished with and justice is all we can expect? Pope Francis seems to think mercy and justice can coexist when he said: "A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just." (Angelus, March 17, 2013).

Read more: <https://files.acrobat.com/a/preview/99f646bf-f292-4441-acc9-e816af21f53a>

Pope: the din of 'ever more rich' drown out cries of poor

John L. Allen Jr. *Ines San Martin, Crux*, 18th November 2018

VATICAN CITY — Championing the cause of the poor, Pope Francis on Sunday lamented

that “the wealthy few” enjoy what, “in justice, belongs to all” and said Christians cannot remain indifferent to the growing cries of the exploited and the indigent, including migrants.

Francis invited about 6,000 poor people and volunteers to help him in the splendor of St. Peter’s Basilica as he celebrated Mass on a day the Catholic Church dedicates to the needy. Later, he sat down with 1,500 of the indigent for a lunch of lasagna, chicken, mashed potatoes and tiramisu in a Vatican auditorium.

In his homily, Francis said “we Christians cannot stand with arms folded in indifference or with arms outstretched in helplessness” about those in need. He cited the “stifled cry” of the unborn, of starving children, “of young people more used to the explosion of bombs than happy shouts at the playground.”

Read more: <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2018/11/18/Pope-the-din-of-ever-more-rich-drown-out-cries-of-poor/>



Sr Patricia Fox, superior of the Our Lady of Sion congregation in the Philippines, was forced to return to Australia on November 5, 2018 after living amongst and serving the people of the Philippines for 27 years. The Government of the Philippines accused her of ‘political action’ not ‘missionary work’ when she spoke up for the poor and human rights. Earlier this year, many people - lay persons, individual religious people and congregations – joined in an enormous petition of support for Sister Pat earlier in the year. A statement was made at the about the power of solidarity and the capacity of ordinary people to change structures and unjust actions. Although Sr Pat was still deported it was evident that the support she received delayed the deportation by months.

40 people came to St Mary’s Church, Erskineville on Saturday 1st December to hear Sr Pat speak simply of her sharing in the vision of Isaiah for justice and peace for those who are oppressed and then about her experience of working with the

farmers, victims of the drug war, Lumads (indigenous People). A strong message that emerged was of resilience of the people and showed by her stance her own passion, heart and resilience.

PROFILE ISSUE

Climate Change in Bangladesh (Part 2)

Case Study: A Solar energy based power generation project and its impact for sustainable development

Overview

A solar energy based project was built in the remote north-eastern area of Bangladesh and here we will briefly shed light about role of this project in achieving sustainable development.

Key Project Fact

- Project Capacity: 400 KW load for 4 hrs a day
- Beneficiary: Inhabitants of 5 villages summing around 6000-7000 people
- Project Value: USD 3.1 million
- Sponsors: Bangladesh Climate Change Trust and Bangladesh Power Development Board
- Project Implementation Agency: Rahimafrooz Renewable Energy Ltd
- Commissioning : 2017

Project Impact to Local Community

This renewable energy based Solar PV project is successfully contributing in the following areas like:

1. Energy Security
2. Spreading Education to local community
3. Access to Information
4. Ensuring Biodiversity
5. Increased Business Mobility

Energy Security

Due to the remote place with adverse terrain, inhabitants of this area were deprived of grid connectivity for long.

After completion of this project, households are getting electricity for 4 hrs daily by which they can be able to lit up bulbs, charge their cellular phones (those who have) and use other low wattage appliances

Spreading Education to local community

For solar electricity, now households are able to use lightbulbs at night time.

Having light at night many households are getting interested to develop reading

habits and many of them are planning to send their children to nearby schools.

Access to Information

With the help of solar electricity, access to communication and information is available now for these local people. These people are now using mobile phones as they can now avail electricity and charge their phones. Moreover, they are able to run low cost television with this PV electricity.

Increase Business Mobility

Due to introduction of electricity, local bazars business hubs remain open for extended hours. For instance, Saskai Bazar, a locally renowned business hub is experiencing increased business activities as per shopkeepers' information.

And Lastly, Ensuring Environment and Bio-diversity

It is needless to say that Solar Electricity is by far one of the most environmental-friendly power source. No carbon emission, no residual hydro-fuel and no noise from solar power plant.

Hence this project is producing power in eco-friendly manner which is very critical for this era of Global Warming.

Rahat Rubaiyat Islam is a trained Project Management Professional having around seven years of overseas work experiences in Renewable Energy (RE) and Energy Efficiency sectors among others.

Rahat Rubaiyat Islam has a bachelor degree in civil engineering with advance project management certification. Now he is volunteering in Pacific Calling Partnership at Edmund Rice Centre.



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

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