



**Jesuit Refugee Service Australia**

ABN: 75 692 565 034

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PO Box 522, Kings Cross NSW 1340  
Phone 02 9356 3888; Fax: 02 9356 3021

E-mail: [jrsinfo@jrs.org.au](mailto:jrsinfo@jrs.org.au)  
Home-page: <http://www.jrs.org.au>

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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For immediate release

### **Jesuit Refugee Service calls for a comprehensive ban on cluster munitions**

Jesuit Refugee Service Australia, in the light of the very successful campaign to ban land mines, is now actively campaigning for an international treaty banning cluster munitions.

'Cluster bombs indiscriminately scatter explosives over wide areas. Many of the bomblets fail to explode on impact, killing and injuring civilians after the conflict,' says JRS Australia's Associate Director Sister Maryanne Loughry RSM.

Sr Loughry recently returned from Cambodia, where she visited a vocational training centre for the disabled run by Jesuit Services Cambodia. Banteay Prieb (Centre of the Dove) has given landmine victims a new lease on life by providing them with skills and helping them contribute and be of value to their communities.

At an in-service training seminar, Sr Loughry discussed with the staff the impact of these injuries on people's mental health, and how best to assist them in times of stress and trauma.

'Staff at the centre know all too well the cost of being injured and maimed by unexploded ordinances,' says Sr Loughry. 'Many of the teaching staff and students have been disabled by landmines as well as war, polio or accidents.'

The Australian Government has endorsed the Wellington Declaration, taking a positive step towards a final treaty banning cluster munitions. However, the government has expressed a willingness to still participate in joint military operations with states that will not be signatories to the future treaty.

Two Cambodian landmine victims recently shared their stories with Australian audiences, urging them to sign on to the campaign for the banning of cluster bombs.

The two were part of a group of young Cambodians who toured Australia, sharing their traditional dances celebrating life and peace. Their performances featured a special dance highlighting the devastating impact of landmines on the country.

Bishop Kike Figaredo SJ, the director of Banteay Prieb, accompanied the group of dancers.

'The war here finished in 1998, yet every day two to three Cambodians are still left blind or without legs or arms, after treading on a mine on their way home or to school, in woods or rice fields,' Bishop Figaredo told audiences in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne.

Jesuit Refugee Service is urging people to add their voice to the campaign, ahead of the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions next month (19 – 30 May).

'Our Cambodian friends are urging Australians to ask the Australian government to support a comprehensive ban on cluster munitions,' says Sr Loughry.

More information on the ban cluster bombs campaign is available at:

<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org>  
[www.austcare.org.au/stopclusterbombs.aspx](http://www.austcare.org.au/stopclusterbombs.aspx)  
[www.jrscambodia.org](http://www.jrscambodia.org)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUvIUqVk1F4>

## **PHOTOGRAPHS ATTACHED**

### **Captions:**

1. The gate of Banteay Prieb (Centre of the Dove), the Jesuit Services-Cambodia vocational and training centre for the disabled, is presently adorned with a large banner calling for the banning of cluster bombs.
2. Two Cambodian landmine victims urge Australian audiences to sign on to the anti-cluster munitions campaign: Mek Channeng, 19, (left) and Smak Mao, 17, (right) both lost limbs to landmines. They are pictured here with Fr. Kike Figaredo, SJ, director of Banteay Prieb

For a high resolution copy of the second photograph, please contact Catherine Marshall on 0447 440 939.

**For interviews or further information, contact Maryanne Loughry, (02) 9356 3888.**