



WHY WE'RE HERE

Since 1989, the Women's Refugee Commission has advocated vigorously for laws, policies and programs to improve the lives and protect the rights of refugee and internally displaced women, children and young people, including those seeking asylum—bringing about lasting, measurable change.

Our research and advocacy lead to life-changing improvements for this vulnerable, yet resilient, population. Our work is crucial because:

- Four out of five of the world's more than 40 million displaced people are women, children and young people. Women and adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to exploitation, rape and abuse. Most refugees are in long-term situations that last an average of 17 years.
- Children and young people, who make up more than half of all refugees, often miss out on years of education and are targets of abuse, abduction and military recruitment.
- Women, children and young people who seek asylum in the U.S. are often held in detention, where they may be subjected to inhumane conditions and denied access to legal representation.

HOW WE CHANGE LIVES

Through research and fact-finding field missions, we identify critical problems that affect displaced people, including gaps in lifesaving reproductive health care, lack of dignified livelihoods and, in the U.S., the treatment of asylum-seekers. We document best practices and propose solutions,

and develop innovative tools to improve the way humanitarian assistance is delivered in refugee settings. On Capitol Hill, at the United Nations and with humanitarian organizations, governments and donors, we push for improvements in refugee policy and practice until measurable, long-term change is realized.

WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

Our work contributes to long-term solutions for refugee women, children and young people. For example:

Giving refugees a chance to earn a living:

Building Livelihoods: A Field Manual for Practitioners in Humanitarian Settings, which we produced in 2009, is the first-ever comprehensive guide to assist field-based programmers and practitioners in designing and implementing more effective economic interventions for displaced people. The manual focuses specifically on the economic needs of displaced women and young people and covers camp-based and urban displacement settings, as well as post-conflict return to communities of origin.

Saving lives with reproductive health care:

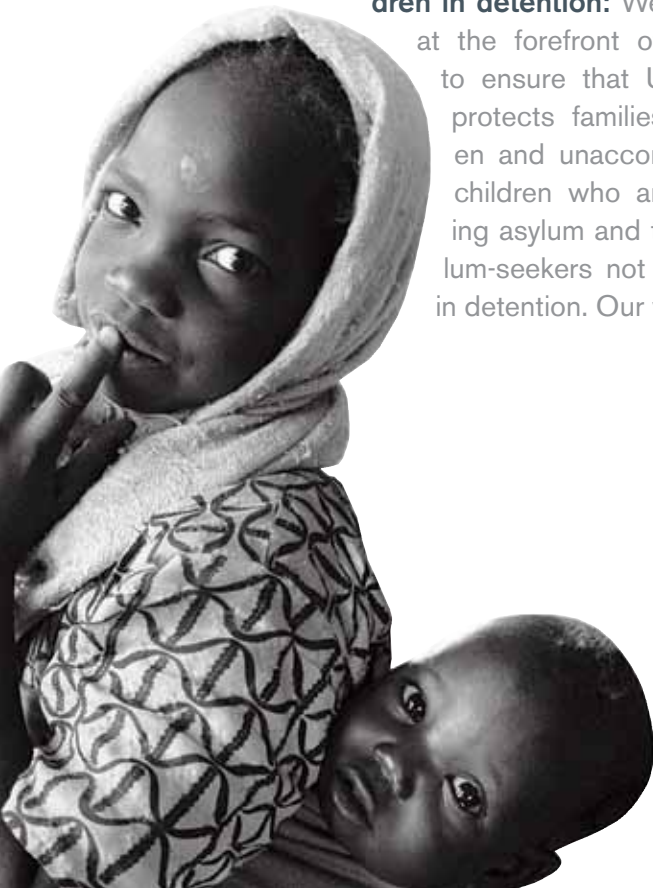
Since 1994, our research and advocacy have played a leading role in ensuring that displaced women, men and young people have greater access to



lifesaving reproductive health care. Our field-friendly materials help humanitarian workers improve reproductive health and provide priority reproductive health services for the acute phase of an emergency. We play a key role in two leading international consortia that advocate and provide reproductive health services for conflict-affected populations around the world.

Keeping women and girls safe when collecting firewood: In 2006, we undertook the first in-depth investigation of the risk of rape and assault that women and girls face when they leave refugee camps to collect firewood. Since 2007, we have worked with leading UN and nongovernmental agencies to develop and disseminate an innovative set of tools that guides the safe provision of fuel in displacement settings. We are soliciting funding to increase technical know-how of humanitarian staff, to research and develop new fuels and energy technologies, and to supply those fuels and technologies to the settings where they are needed most.

Improving conditions for families and children in detention: We remain at the forefront of efforts to ensure that U.S. law protects families, women and unaccompanied children who are seeking asylum and that asylum-seekers not be held in detention. Our work led



to the transfer of most unaccompanied children from detention by law enforcement to custody by a social services agency—a significant improvement. The Department of Homeland Security also implemented many of our recommended changes and introduced new standards of care at a former prison in Texas, where families seeking asylum were held in appalling conditions.

Putting displaced adolescents on the map: Our research with displaced adolescents demonstrated that young people are an untapped resource with few opportunities for secondary and non-formal schooling or for developing skills that will enable them to get jobs. Our ongoing youth initiative aims to build young people's social and economic capacities by equipping them with the tools and skills they need to rebuild their lives, whether they return to their country of origin, settle in the country where they are living as refugees or resettle in a third country.

Read more about these and other issues at:
womensrefugeecommission.org

The Women's Refugee Commission is affiliated with and is legally part of the International Rescue Committee, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and does not receive direct financial support from the IRC.

2009

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