



# Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

## WHY WE'RE HERE

Since 1989, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children has focused the world's attention on the particular needs of refugee and internally displaced women, children and adolescents. 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 35 million refugees are women, children and adolescents. And we know that women and adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to exploitation, rape and abuse.
- > Children and young people, who make up approximately 50 percent 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.

## WHAT WE DO

For 19 years, we have identified cutting-edge issues and conducted critical on-the-ground research—investigating and proposing solutions to the seemingly intractable problems faced by women and children uprooted by war or other crises. We change lives by:

- > Identifying and documenting, through research and field visits, the widely overlooked problems that adversely affect refugee women, children and adolescents;
- > Developing guidelines, manuals and other practical tools to assist the humanitarian community in changing practice on the ground;
- > Advocating to governments, the UN and aid organizations to make changes in laws, policies and practice that bring measurable improvements to the lives of refugees;
- > Giving voice to refugees and displaced people themselves so that they can realize their aspirations, including getting an education and supporting their families.

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### Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

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

May 2008 | Photo: Megan McKenna/Women's Commission



## WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

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

- > We undertook the first in-depth investigation into the dangers of rape and other forms of sexual violence that women and girls face when they leave refugee camps to collect firewood. We now lead the effort to change the world's approach to fuel and firewood in refugee situations.
- > After we issued a report in 2007 on the appalling conditions at a former prison in Texas where families seeking asylum are held, the Department of Homeland Security implemented many of our recommended changes and has introduced new standards of care.
- > In 2007, we were among the first organizations to meet with Iraqi refugees living in Jordan and to identify the lack of access to health care, including lifesaving reproductive health services.
- > Our groundbreaking 2004 "Global Survey on Education in Emergencies" made the compelling case for uninterrupted education for children and young people in conflict and emergency situations. In 2007, we released the innovative human rights booklet, "The Right to Education During Displacement," to help refugees advocate for their right to education.