



## More Than Embroidery: Promoting Appropriate Livelihoods for Displaced Women and Adolescents

**H**istorically, displacement for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been viewed as a short-term phenomenon; projects focused on developing self-sufficiency have often been ad hoc, piecemeal interventions, more focused on psychological and social recovery than on income generation. However, now that the majority of refugees and IDPs are displaced for an average of 17 years, we must rethink everything we do.

Refugees need opportunities to develop skills and generate income while displaced, as well as to better prepare them for eventual return to their own country, local integration in the host country or resettlement to a third country.

A "livelihood" refers to the capabilities, assets and strategies that people use to make a living. In refugee and IDP contexts, livelihoods cover the range of activities and programs that work toward and enhance self-sufficiency, including non-formal education, vocational training and skills-training programs, income generation activities and food-for-work programs. They might also be microcredit schemes, agriculture programs, business start-up programs and job placement programs.

The Women's Commission is embarking on a new project to help the humanitarian community develop and implement more effective livelihood programs

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*Voices of Courage* recipients were INEE, represented by Allison Anderson; Aziza Ishaqzai, represented by Shogufa Alpar; Christiana Thorpe; and Microsoft Corporation, represented by Pamela Passman.

## Awards Luncheon Highlights Education for Conflict-affected Children

**A**t its 2006 *Voices of Courage* Awards luncheon in May, the Women's Commission honored individuals and organizations working to ensure that children in emergency situations receive a quality, uninterrupted education.

Lesley Stahl of CBS TV's *60 Minutes* hosted the sold-out event at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in New York, and Caroline Kennedy presented the awards. Recipients included the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, a global network of organizations and individuals working to ensure the right to education in emergencies and post-crisis reconstruction, and Microsoft Corporation for its work to promote technology education worldwide.

Aziza Ishaqzai, an Afghan refugee who runs a school  
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Burmese refugees in Thailand receive computer training.

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# A Message from the Board of Directors' Co-Chairs



## Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children was established in 1989 to address the particular needs of refugee and displaced women and children. The Women's Commission is legally part of the International Rescue Committee, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

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**D**ear Friends of the Women's Commission,

As we look at current conflicts, such as in Darfur, one of the most horrifying aspects we see is the degree to which women and girls are the deliberate targets of violence and sexual abuse. This violence—usually systematic, purposeful and officially sanctioned by those commanding the troops and militias involved—aims to terrify minority or marginalized groups into fleeing their homes, and to humiliate and demoralize entire communities. Women and girls have even been sexually exploited by UN peacekeepers and humanitarian workers whose job it is to help and protect them. Often women and girls are blamed for the rape and may be shunned (or worse) by their husbands, families and communities. Rape survivors may be exposed to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, in circumstances where treatment sadly remains extremely unlikely.

The Women's Commission is tackling the problem of gender-based violence (GBV) in a variety of ways.

- With partner organizations, we were among the first to publish a comprehensive study on the issue, *If Not Now, When?* (2002, <http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/ifnotnow/index.shtml>), followed by a *Gender-Based Violence Tools Manual* (2004, [http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/gbv\\_tools.shtml](http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/gbv_tools.shtml)), which provides service-delivery groups with comprehensive advice on assessments, planning, implementing and evaluating programs to prevent and respond to GBV in the field.
- *Beyond Firewood: Fuel Alternatives and Protection Strategies for Displaced Women and Girls* (2006, <http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/fuel.pdf>) is an assessment of the problem of women and girls being raped when they go out to collect firewood. The report brings together all the strategies that have been tried to mitigate the problem—from fuel-efficient stoves to firewood patrols, to income generation projects. We are now working with UN agencies to ensure that protective strategies will become standard practice in all displaced and conflict-affected settings.
- Our office in Washington, D.C., has been working to ensure passage of legislation, The Widows and Orphans Act, that would provide expedited access to asylum for women and children who need it—for example, those who have been raped and are unable to remain safely in their own communities.
- On behalf of the International Council of Voluntary Associations, we have conducted an evaluation of the Building Safer Organizations project (2006, <http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/BSO.pdf>), which was put in place to ensure that humanitarian organizations have rigorous procedures to investigate and address instances of sexual abuse and exploitation related to their own staff and programs. The Women's Commission is a founding member of the newly established InterAction Working Group on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which will address gaps identified in our report.

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## Giving Youth in Darfur an Opportunity to Learn

Adolescence is a difficult time for most young people, particularly so for displaced youth. They are often forgotten in humanitarian and development programming, such as child protection and education initiatives. Their strengths and potential as contributors to their societies go largely unnoticed and unsupported by the international community.

In Darfur, Sudan, thousands of young people have been forced to flee their homes and are living in camps with few opportunities to learn. Secondary school is nonexistent; many donors and relief organizations consider it a luxury where funding for primary school is tight. These youth can attend school only if they can afford transportation to the nearest town and school fees. Very few internally displaced people (IDPs) can afford these expenses.

Without access to secondary school or vocational training, thousands of displaced teens sit idle in camps all day long, with no constructive activities to fill their time. As anywhere in the world, these youth—with growing frustration and little hope for the future—can become a source of violence and insecurity. They are vulnerable to exploitation and more likely to become involved in harmful activities.

Nongovernmental organizations need to establish more programming for young people, including vocational training, designed in collaboration with young people themselves. Youth centers, where young men and women can learn basic literacy and math, are also essential. Often, these centers are the first opportunity young people have ever had to go to school.

Amal, a 17-year-old girl, told us that her native village didn't have any schools. In the months that she has been coming to the youth center in



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Some children and adolescents displaced in Darfur have access to education for the first time. More needs to be done, however, to ensure that adolescents are able to go to school.

Secali IDP camp, she has learned Arabic, numeracy and basic English. “Coming here and learning makes me feel very good,” she said.

This is a critical period for Darfur. Young people must be given skills and opportunities so that they have

hope for their future and that of Darfur. Left idle and with little hope, they can be a source of instability. Given the proper tools and support, young women and men can be conduits of peace, development and prosperity for their communities. ❖

## Tool Promotes Right to Education for All

The right to education is enshrined in international treaties, conventions and resolutions. Children and youth have the right to education no matter where they live, including if they are displaced.

As part of the Women's Commission's campaign to promote displaced children and youths' right to quality and safe education, we are pleased to announce the release of *Right to Education during Displacement: A Resource for Organizations Working with Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*. This user-friendly tool is designed for local, regional and international organizations, UN agencies, government agencies and education personnel working with displaced communities, in order to help refugees and the internally displaced advocate for their right to quality education. The booklet serves as:

- a training and capacity-building resource on the right to education for those working with displaced populations and others;
- an awareness-raising tool to encourage humanitarian assistance agencies to implement education programs—and donors to fund them;
- a call to action for organizations and individuals to promote access to and completion of quality education for everyone affected by crises.

On a recent mission to Darfur, staff shared copies with local groups, which responded enthusiastically that this type of capacity-building tool is urgently needed. The Women's Commission is distributing copies to groups around the world, and will update the tool based on feedback. We will also translate it into Arabic and French. The Right to Education resource is available at [http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/right\\_to\\_ed.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/right_to_ed.pdf); for hard copies please email Jenny Perlman Robinson at [jennyr@womenscommission.org](mailto:jennyr@womenscommission.org).

## Global Campaign to Stop Rape in War

**A**lthough rarely acknowledged, sexual violence has been a ubiquitous component of armed conflict throughout history. Evidence suggests that the use of rape as a weapon of war has increased dramatically in recent years in conflict areas.

The consequences for women and girls who have survived sexual violence include HIV infection, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, severe psychological damage and traumatic fistula (tears in the bladder, vagina or rectum resulting in constant leakage of urine and feces). In addition to the grave consequences for women's physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health, many survivors are subjected to discrimination and stigma, compounding their suffering.

At a recent international conference on sexual violence in conflict, the head of the United Nations Population Fund remarked, "It is clear that the world and individual governments must do more to prevent and respond to these serious human rights violations and crimes, which constitute a global health problem and a serious threat to development, reconstruction and peace."



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Women, such as these internally displaced women collecting wood in Darfur, Sudan, are subject to rape, often as a deliberate tactic of war.

In an effort to address this growing global scourge, the Women's Commission is collaborating with a small group of nongovernmental organizations to spearhead a global initiative to stop sexual violence during armed conflict. The campaign, Call to Action: Stop Rape in War, represents an important opportunity to generate increased commitment and action from a range of actors, including the UN, donors, civil society, national and international nongovernmental organizations, human rights organizations and governments.

## Notes from the Field Darfur

On a visit to Darfur, Women's Commission staff found that progress has finally been achieved in training humanitarian workers to provide clinical management for survivors of rape, and that many clinics were providing this care. However, women and girls continue to suffer from complications of pregnancy and delivery as well as unwanted pregnancy due to rape and unsafe abortions.

## Sierra Leone

A survey in Sierra Leone in 2002 indicated that half of reproductive-age women had never heard of HIV/AIDS. A 2001 survey showed that only 5 percent of female youth were able to describe at least three ways to avoid contracting the disease.

The Women's Commission supported a five-day HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control for Humanitarian Workers Training hosted by Marie Stopes-Sierra Leone. The course deepened health workers' understanding of the complexities of HIV/AIDS and equipped participants with knowledge and skills to improve HIV/AIDS program design and implementation. It also encouraged positive attitudes toward people living with HIV/AIDS. ❖

## Message from the Co-chairs

*(continued from page 2)*

- Time and again, we have found that the economic vulnerability of women and girls makes them susceptible to sexual abuse and exploitation. We have launched a major new project on livelihoods to find out what works and does not work, especially in programs that target women and adolescents. Our findings—and practical tools to help humanitarian organizations strengthen their programs—will be widely disseminated. See p. 1 for more.

The Women's Commission is committed to working

to end the scourge of violence against displaced women, adolescents and children through its program of research and advocacy. Please check the Take Action section of our Web site ([http://www.womenscommission.org/take\\_action/index.shtml](http://www.womenscommission.org/take_action/index.shtml)) regularly to participate in our advocacy efforts on this and other important issues.

Glenda Burkhardt

Regina Peruggi

## Livelihoods

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targeting displaced women and adolescents, male and female. The program began in May 2006 and will run for three years. The Women's Commission will produce a comprehensive field manual aimed at donors and practitioners. The manual will review all livelihood activities, contain tools and



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Skills learned in tailoring classes will help women like this Burmese refugee in Thailand earn a living and provide for themselves and their families.

guidelines on how to use them, and include promising field practices. It will aim to transform the way livelihood projects are implemented.

The Women's Commission will undertake field missions to assess and

community. Operational organizations, including the International Rescue Committee, will implement pilot projects in four sites to allow for real-time field testing and a continuous learning cycle.

Feedback from the international community and refugees themselves has consistently stated the need for this project. The NGO community wants to do better. The displaced deserve better. The Women's Commission's tools and guidance will help everyone do so.

*[The project is funded by the U.S.*

*Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and the UK Department of International Development, with start-up funds from the Starfish Foundation.] ❖*

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document current livelihood programs—what works and why, as well as what doesn't. We will carry out desk research to learn from a broad range of organizations and academics, including from the development

## Luncheon

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for girls in Pakistan, also received the *Voices of Courage* Award. Ms. Ishaqzai was unable to attend due to security reasons; Women's Commission staff member Shogufa Alpar, a former Afghan refugee herself, accepted the award on her behalf. "Through education, women are not only enlightened about their rights and social responsibilities but are better equipped and informed to actively and effectively participate in the development of their societies," she said, reading Ms. Ishaqzai's acceptance speech. "Educated Afghan women can also contribute to the peace process in our country."

The Women's Commission also honored Christiana Thorpe, the founding chairperson of the Sierra

Leone Chapter of the Forum of African Women Educationalists. Ms. Thorpe is Sierra Leone's former Minister of Education, and a former school teacher and principal. She has not only improved education in her native country, but also worked to ensure that Sierra Leonean students continued to receive an education when they and she were displaced in neighboring Guinea during the long civil war. Ms. Thorpe delivered the keynote speech, warning, "Education is definitely about academics, but it is even more so about economics. Whenever education is neglected for whatever reason, the resulting costs become very high."

The luncheon broke a Women's Commission record, raising more



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Host Lesley Stahl and awards presenter Caroline Kennedy at the Women's Commission *Voices of Courage* Awards luncheon.

than \$550,000 for our work. Top contributors included Microsoft Corporation; Miranda Kaiser; Orrick, Herrington and Sutcliffe LLP; David Spears; and Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Riggio. ❖

## Educational Video for Unaccompanied Children Released on Capitol Hill



Child actors play the roles of children seeking asylum in the Women's Commission's new video "What Happens When I Go to Immigration Court?"

**O**n July 18 the Women's Commission hosted a reception on Capitol Hill to release its groundbreaking educational video for immigrant children and children seeking asylum, "What Happens When I Go To Immigration Court?" The film, which was created and produced pro-

bono by producer Kim Berner, was enthusiastically received by guests at the reception, including congressional allies, the Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review, UNHCR, and colleagues in the legal and nonprofit communities.

Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA-16) lent their support to the reception. They are the

chief sponsors in the Senate and House, respectively, of bipartisan legislation to protect the approximately 8,000 children who arrive in the United States alone each year seeking safety. As Senator Feinstein noted, "Many are vulnerable children who have suffered traumatic circum-

stances and are then forced to struggle through a legal system designed primarily for adults." The new Women's Commission video strives to make this system less daunting.

Representative Lofgren commended the Women's Commission for "developing a resource that will help children who are here alone, without an adult to help them, better understand the legal process that will determine their future."

The reception launching "What Happens When I Go To Immigration Court?" was sponsored by the law firms of Holland & Knight, Latham & Watkins and Steptoe & Johnson. The video was made possible by the generous financial support of Hollywood director and producer Doug Liman. The video and an accompanying user's guide are available through the Women's Commission Web site at <http://www.womenscommission.org/projects/detention/unacc.shtml>. ❖

## Advocacy

### Focus on Funding and Legislation

**T**he Women's Commission's advocacy efforts in Washington are currently focused on two main issues: fiscal year 2007 funding bills and immigration legislation.

The government's fiscal year ends on September 30, so the House and Senate will be working throughout September to try to reach agreement on 2007 funding levels for all federal agencies. The Women's Commission is especially concerned about appropriations for programs that protect and assist refugees, internally displaced women and children, and

asylum seekers. We will push for the strongest funding possible for these programs when members of the House and Senate meet in the weeks ahead to resolve the differences in their respective appropriations bills.

As this newsletter goes to print, immigration legislation remains stalled in Congress. There are significant differences between the bills passed by the House and the Senate, and it is not clear if any action will be taken this year. That said, the Women's Commission and other humanitarian and human rights organizations are not letting up on advocacy. We are

taking every opportunity to convey to Congress that any final legislation must protect refugees and asylum seekers. To do otherwise is contrary to our country's long tradition of serving as a safe haven for those fleeing persecution and violence.

The Women's Commission's advocacy is made so much stronger when our friends and supporters add their voices to our efforts. Please consult the Take Action section of our Web site to see how you can help as Congress considers key issues affecting vulnerable women and children. ❖

## Watchlist Calls for Strong Partnerships between UN and Civil Society Organizations

**A**ppalling abuses continue to be committed against children in situations of armed conflict, despite substantial strides made by the United Nations Security Council and the international community following the adoption of the Security Council's six resolutions on this issue over the past several years.

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, housed at the Women's Commission, released a policy paper to coincide with the UN Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict. The Open Debate marked the one-year anniversary of the Council's Resolution 1612, which called for the establishment of a UN-based mechanism to monitor and report on violations against children in armed conflict situations and eventually to hold perpetrators accountable.

Watchlist's paper, *The Power of Partnership: Guiding Principles for Partnerships to End Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict*, calls for sustainable and strong partnerships between UN and civil society organizations in order to protect children from violations committed against them and to ensure the success of the nascent UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.

Drawing on experience with field-based organizations around the world, the Watchlist network concludes that a monitoring, reporting and response mechanism will succeed in halting violations against children only if it is built upon genuine, collaborative, operational partnerships among diverse organizations. The *Power of Partnership* identifies six "Guiding Principles for Building Effective Partnerships": transparency; the shared goals of halting violations and seeking remedies; guidance pro-

vided by local partners; open communication; equality and mutual respect in identifying problems and generating solutions; and adequate training for all partners involved.

In a rare opportunity, Watchlist was invited to speak on behalf of civil society organizations at the Security Council Open Debate. Bukeni Tete Waruzi Beck, a Watchlist partner from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, represented the Watchlist network and raised several key messages presented in *The Power of Partnership*.

Watchlist members in New York and around the world will continue to follow up on the paper's recommendations with UN officials, national governments, representatives of civil society organizations, donors and others.



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Watchlist calls for stronger partnerships between the United Nations and civil society in situations of armed conflict.

To read the policy paper, including Watchlist's recommendations for ensuring the successful implementation of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and responding to reported violations against children, please visit [www.watchlist.org](http://www.watchlist.org). ❖

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### Staff and Board Updates

The Women's Commission bids farewell to **Lori Heninger**, director, Education in Emergencies Initiative, and **Tzvetomira Kaltcheva**, program specialist, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. We welcome **Michelle Brané**, director, Detention and Asylum Program, **Brooke Lauten**, program manager, and **Simar Singh**, program specialist, both at the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. **Susan Vignola** is promoted to Senior Development Officer.

The following people have joined the Women's Commission's board of directors: **Susan Ginkel**, **Sian Hansen**, **Barbara Murphy-Warrington** and **Hazel Reitz**. **Julia Aker Duany**, **Mary Moglia**, **Patsy Preston**, **Joyce Sherman** and **Carmen Valenzuela** rotate off the board.

We thank the following interns for their dedication over the spring and summer: **Stephanie Chaban** (Reproductive Health); **Kristin Chin** (Watchlist); **Lisa Donnegan** (Protection and Participation); **Elisabeth Eittreim** (Education in Emergencies/CAP); **Michael Feigelson** (Education in Emergencies); **Maryam Ishani** (Watchlist); **Lisa Jamhoury** (Protection and Participation); **Patricia Kim** (Protection and Participation); **Kristina Mitchell** (Protection and Participation); **Nora Nassri** (Watchlist); and **Gabrielle Oestreicher** (Reproductive Health Program).

## “Kids Helping Kids”

When 10-year-old Mason Shuya saw a report on World Refugee Day (June 22) on CNN with Anderson Cooper and Angelina Jolie, he knew he wanted to do something to help. The kids he saw on TV were “standing in a place that looked like a dump,” he said. The El Paso, Texas boy had been selling lemonade to friends and neighbors as a moneymaking scheme, but, after seeing the news special, he decided to donate the money instead. Mason charges 50 cents a cup for his freshly squeezed lemonade, and after selling it for about six hours, he had raised \$51.50 to send to the Women’s Commission.



Ten-year-old Mason Shuya exhibits both an entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to help refugees.

The Women’s Commission will use the money toward its programs to help children around the world displaced by conflict. Mason’s message to them: “I know you are suffering and I will do my best to send money and help.”

## Challenge Grant Fulfilled in Short Order

We are pleased to announce that the challenge grant in honor of Founding Director Emerita Mary Anne Schwalbe, established this spring by two long-term friends and loyal supporters of the Women’s Commission, has been fulfilled! To date, we have received more than \$103,000 in gifts and pledges, surpassing the \$100,000 goal. This goal was achieved with minimal persuasion on the part of the Women’s Commission—it doesn’t take much to convince friends to participate in something that honors Mary Anne Schwalbe. Mary Anne has been instrumental to the establishment, growth, sustainability and overall success of the Women’s Commission. We would not be who we are today without her vision, commitment and generosity. Many thanks to all who contributed to this fund that honors her service.

And congratulations, Mary Anne!

To make a secure online donation, please visit <http://www.womenscommission.org/donate/index.shtml>. To send an advocacy letter on behalf of refugee women and children, please visit [http://www.womenscommission.org/take\\_action/index.shtml](http://www.womenscommission.org/take_action/index.shtml). Thank you for your support! ❖

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