

# Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children



ANNUAL REPORT 2005

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WOMEN'S  
COMMISSION  
for refugee women & children



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

International Rescue Committee  
122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor  
New York, NY 10168-1289  
Tel. 212. 551. 3088 Fax. 212. 551. 3180  
[wcrwc@womenscommission.org](mailto:wcrwc@womenscommission.org)  
[www.womenscommission.org](http://www.womenscommission.org)

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children works to improve the lives and defend the rights of refugee and internally displaced women, children and adolescents.

We advocate for their inclusion and participation in programs of humanitarian assistance and protection.

We provide technical expertise and policy advice to donors and organizations that work with refugees and the displaced.

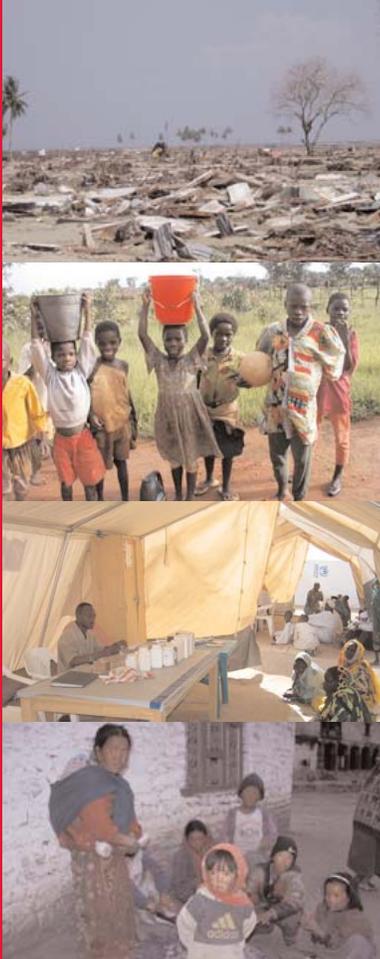
We make recommendations to policy makers based on rigorous research and information gathered on fact-finding missions.

We join with refugee women, children and adolescents to ensure that their voices are heard from the community level to the highest councils of governments and international organizations.

We do this in the conviction that their empowerment is the surest route to the greater well-being of all forcibly displaced people.

*The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children is an independent affiliate of the International Rescue Committee. The Commission was founded in 1989.*





DEAR FRIENDS OF THE WOMEN'S COMMISSION:

In 2005, our attention has been focused to an unusual degree on events in the United States. Hurricane Katrina brought home to all of us the tremendous suffering that innocent people experience when disaster strikes. We saw that the immediate needs of displaced women and children are the same the world over. Children need to resume attending school as quickly as possible, for the stability and physical security that school provides as well as for uninterrupted access to learning. Women must have immediate access to reproductive health services, especially antenatal and childbirth services and programs to prevent and treat the kind of gender-based violence that often accompanies a breakdown in social order.

In refugee settings, the Women's Commission has taken the lead on both of these issues. Twelve years ago, we produced the first empirical study drawing attention to the reproductive health needs of displaced women and to the lack of services to address these needs. In 2004, a major evaluation was completed which demonstrated that reproductive health services, although far from perfect, are now part of standard practice in refugee settings. These changes resulted from the advocacy work of the Women's Commission and the many humanitarian and reproductive health organizations with which it collaborates. Similarly, in

2004, the Women's Commission published the first comprehensive study on education in emergencies, *The Global Survey on Education in Emergencies*. We are now working—again, in concert with like-minded organizations—to ensure that EVERY child displaced by conflict and natural disasters has access to education.

Hurricane Katrina also showed us that, once the immediate crisis has passed, displaced individuals desperately want opportunities to provide for themselves and their families. They want jobs. This is true of displaced people everywhere. In 2006, the Women's Commission is launching a new "livelihoods" initiative to address this very issue. We will conduct field studies with operational partners throughout the developing world to assess current practice, initiate new pilot studies to test new approaches and publish a survey of past experiences and emerging best practices. Armed with this report, we will advocate to ensure that all displaced women and adolescents have access to appropriate livelihood opportunities and training.

Recognizing that the United States plays an enormous role in offering asylum to those fleeing conflict and persecution, we continued in 2005 to work to protect the rights of women and children asylum seekers in the United States. We produced a landmark video titled "What Happens When I Go to Immigration Court?" which will help detained children understand their immigration court proceedings. We will continue to support legislation that: provides pro bono counsel and guardians to detained children; allows expedited resettlement of certain women and children at risk of harm overseas; and provides temporary protection from deportation for Haitians living in the United States. We will also continue to oppose legislation that harms women and children seeking asylum in our country, including legislation that mandates their detention regardless of whether they pose a threat to the community, requires unrealistic levels of evidence to prove an asylum claim and makes it an aggravated felony to enter the United States using a false document.

Please read our report to find out more about the accomplishments of our programs in 2005 and our goals for 2006. We thank you for your support of the Women's Commission and of refugee women and children the world over who benefit from—and are the reason for—our advocacy.

Carolyn Makinson  
Executive Director

Glenda Burkhart      Regina Peruggi  
Co-Chairs, Board of Directors

## Children and Adolescents

*"My participation in the [northern Uganda youth] project has changed my role in the community in one or two ways. From my savings I use to sit in bad groups of youth who drink and use drugs but now I use my savings to help my family and I contribute toward any programme in the community, I now attend community meetings which are educative. The project also changed my role in the community as I now advise my fellow youth on responsible decision, I feel I am becoming advocate within my community."* Omona Johnson, 26



Children and youth make up at least half of refugee and displaced populations. While they show tremendous resilience and ability to survive, they are also vulnerable and in need of protection and assistance. Many youth assume adult responsibilities before they should have to, as heads of household, principal wage earners and teen parents. Few experience a true childhood.

The Women's Commission continues to bring refugee and internally displaced children's and youths' rights and concerns, along with recommended solutions, to the attention of governments, UN agencies, donors, nongovernmental organizations and others. The Women's Commission works to support policy changes and more effective programs that will better protect children and youth affected by armed conflict and provide them with the assistance they need.

### Youth: The hope for a better future in northern Uganda

Children and youth continue to be among the main victims of the 19-year conflict in northern Uganda, which has been described as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. More than 28,000 children have been abducted by the rebel Lord's Resistance Army to act as soldiers and sex slaves, while an estimated 40,000 "night commuters" leave their homes every night to seek safety in shelters in towns.

The Women's Commission has worked with youth groups in northern Uganda since 2001. In 2005, the Children and Adolescents Program completed its capacity-strengthening work with youth groups, including organizing four advocacy and networking workshops. The Women's Commission, with funding from American Jewish World Service (AJWS), partnered with Gulu Youth for Action, Watwero Rights Focus Initiative, Concerned Children and Youth Association and Pader Concerned Youth Association to develop international and local advocacy strategies that promote the positive role of youth during conflict and explore ways in which the international community can support them. Women's Commission staff worked with the groups on proposal writing, budgeting and record keeping, management and other technical areas. The groups will focus on activities to prevent HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence, as well as human rights and education—issues they chose as the most critical to them. The capacity-building project has been successfully transferred to AJWS.



This will help both the wider community and myself. Skills have been passed on and there will be effective transfer of the same, resulting from a kind of "multiplier effect." One teaching another, then the one to others. A chain then forms and skills are transferred. This will ensure sustainability.

*Acuch Peter, member of the Concerned Children and Youth Association and participant in workshops with the Women's Commission.*

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YOUNG REFUGEES OFFER  
SOLUTIONS TO THEIR  
PROBLEMS

In New York, the Women's Commission continued to urge United Nations ambassadors to push for stronger UN humanitarian assistance and security activities in northern Uganda. This work was carried out through panel presentations, meetings and two reports, *Learning in a War Zone: Education in Northern Uganda* ([http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/Ed\\_Ug.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/Ed_Ug.pdf)) and *Resilience in the Darkness: An Update on Child and Adolescent Night Commuters in Northern Uganda* ([http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/Ug\\_Resil.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/Ug_Resil.pdf)).

### Youth speak out

*Youth Speak Out: New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict* ([http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/cap\\_ysofinal\\_rev.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/cap_ysofinal_rev.pdf)), released in January 2005, was the final report of a four-year project looking at the situation of youth in armed conflict.

*Youth Speak Out* provides a unique overview of the problems and challenges young people face during and after armed conflict as identified by young people themselves and offers youth-driven solutions and promising practices for addressing them. The report compares the findings of research conducted by more than 150 youth with more than 3,000 of their peers and adults in Kosovo, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone. *Youth Speak Out* also highlights some of the international support given for humanitarian assistance to youth.

The report provides new information and practical ideas for further coordinated advocacy and immediate action for and with young people affected by armed conflict. It is aimed at decision makers at all levels and shows how actions taken with and for young people affected by armed conflict have made significant constructive differences in their and their communities' protection and well-being. It also identifies the serious gaps that remain. Finally, *Youth Speak Out* identifies specific and practical steps that can and should be taken to expand on good program experiences and improve on policy guidelines for young people's protection and care. These include making education a priority; appropriate skills training; and including young people in reconstruction and economic development planning and projects.

*Youth Speak Out* (the full report, as well as one-page reference guides on issues affecting youth in armed conflict) can be found at <http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/index.shtml>

### Education: A basic right for displaced children and youth

Education plays a vital role in the lives of children and youth affected by emergency situations; however, according to the Women's Commission's 2004 landmark report, the *Global Survey on Education in Emergencies* ([http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/Ed\\_Emerg.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/Ed_Emerg.pdf)), in the 10 situations that have produced the



## Education in Emergencies Included in 2005 World Summit Outcome Document: Significant Advocacy Victory for Women's Commission and Partners

Despite overall rather weak language in the Outcome Document for the 2005 World Summit, the final, adopted version reaffirms States' commitment to timely and effective humanitarian assistance for children in armed conflicts; *education is the only sector singled out as an element of that effective humanitarian assistance*. The Outcome Document states:

Protecting children in situations of armed conflicts

118. We therefore call upon all States concerned to take concrete measures to ensure accountability and compliance by those responsible for grave abuses against children. We also reaffirm our commitment to ensure that children in armed conflicts receive timely and effective humanitarian assistance, *including education*, for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

This is a significant advocacy victory for the entire education in emergencies movement. The Women's Commission worked for more than six months with the Save the Children Alliance, the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies and the International Rescue Committee to advocate for attention to education in emergencies around the Summit, and to have specific language in the Outcome Document.

Through this focused advocacy effort, the Outcome Document, adopted by 191 countries, expressly links education to humanitarian response. This is a foundation upon which all future work on education in emergencies can be built.

greatest number of uprooted persons, 27 million displaced children and youth do not have access to school. More than most, these young people can benefit from the structure, stimulation and safety a stable learning environment provides. A four-page summary of the Global Survey is available at <http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/EiE4pg.pdf>.

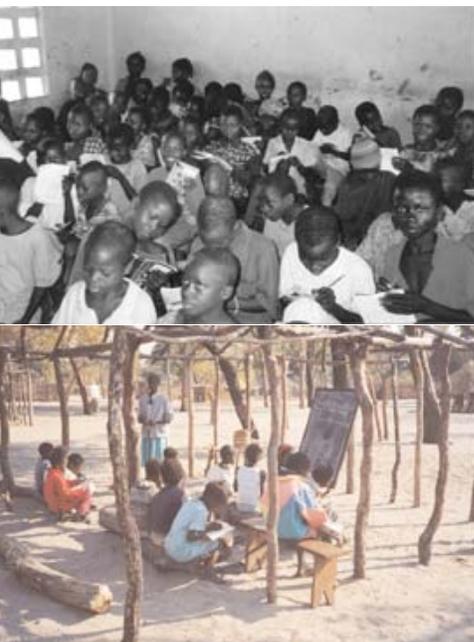
The Women's Commission has embarked on a project to gather case studies and lessons learned about education during the transition from conflict to post-conflict reconstruction, as a foundation to advocate for improved educational policies and programming. The information gathered will not only inform post-conflict reconstruction needs, but will also contribute to the development of education programs during conflict that can provide displaced children and youth with the best possibility for a smooth transition upon return.

### Minimum standards for education in emergencies

The Women's Commission participated in the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) second global consultation in Cape Town, South Africa in December 2004. INEE is a membership organization made up of more than 1,000 individuals and 3,000 organizations, including the Women's Commission.

During the Consultation, INEE released the "Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies," a set of internationally created guidelines to be implemented at the beginning of a humanitarian crisis. The Women's Commission received funding to carry out one of the initial assessments of the use of the Minimum Standards in the field, during a mission to Darfur, Sudan.

The Commission was a founding member of an ongoing coalition



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WOMEN AND GIRLS AT  
RISK IN CAMPS

of international nongovernmental organizations in New York that advocates for the inclusion of education in emergencies in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals policies and programs. (See box on page 6.)

**"Don't Forget Us": Sudanese refugees in Chad**

In January, a Women's Commission delegation traveled to eastern Chad to assess the situation of adolescent girl refugees who had fled from Darfur, Sudan. The delegation visited 10 refugee camps and collected data on education, protection and reproductive health. Staff found that women and girls continued to endure life-threatening dangers and faced numerous barriers to education. Beyond basic pre- and post-natal care, there was no reproductive health care or psychosocial assistance for survivors of gender-based violence, including rape.

Upon their return, the delegation met with representatives of four Congressional offices to push for increased funding for refugees and internally displaced persons in Chad and Darfur through the Supplemental Bill presented by the President to the Congress. The four representatives had recently returned from a mission to Chad to see the situation for themselves. A member of the Women's Commission delegation made a presentation on the refugee situation in Chad at a briefing on Capitol Hill.

For more on the work of the Children and Adolescents Program, visit

<http://www.womenscommission.org/projects/children/index.shtml>



## Protection and Participation

*"Please pay attention to the pain of the people. Do not look at us as case numbers—see us as people with blood running through our veins."*  
Iranian refugee women interviewed in Van, Turkey, October 2005

At risk for sexual exploitation and trafficking, having unequal access to services and protection, and marginalized from leadership and decision-making structures, displaced women, adolescents and children around the world continue to be under-served and under-represented. Through research, field assessments, reports and advocacy, the Protection and Participation Program works to ensure that displaced women's, adolescents' and children's voices are heard, that they are able to meaningfully participate in decisions affecting their lives, that they receive equal access to services and programs and that they are protected from further harm.

### Focusing on age and gender to enhance refugee protection

When communities are displaced, women, young people, the elderly and minorities are often marginalized. They seldom get a chance to participate in decisions that directly affect their lives, which can put them at greater risk of harm.

For more than a decade, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has sought to strengthen its work protecting refugees, including giving more priority to the needs of women and children. In 2004, the agency introduced substantive institutional and programming changes under a new strategy of "age, gender and diversity mainstreaming" within its operations. UNHCR formed the strategy in response to three key evaluations, including the Women's Commission's 2002 report, *UNHCR policy on refugee women and guidelines on their protection: An assessment of ten years of implementation* (<http://www.women-commission.org/pdf/unhcr.pdf>). The Women's Commission's Protection and Participation Program is partnering with UNHCR on its age, gender and diversity strategy to enhance its success, depth and sustainability.

Age, gender and diversity mainstreaming means that it is everyone's responsibility to consider how the age and social roles of a refugee impact needs, vulnerabilities and options, and to integrate the concerns of men, women, boys and girls into planning and programming. This requires greater accountability by UNHCR staff and partner agencies in ensuring that their actions promote the rights of all refugees. It also requires a new approach in how UNHCR communicates with refugees and communities to help make refugee participation and decision-making more central to its work.

The Women's Commission's partnership with UNHCR in developing its new strategy has included participating in the agency's

WORKING TO ENSURE  
CONCERNS OF ALL  
REFUGEES ARE TAKEN  
INTO ACCOUNT



pilot and evaluation visits to Sierra Leone, Zambia, India and Greece. As members of the mission teams, Commission staff made recommendations on the tools and methodology to strengthen UNHCR's rollout of the strategy worldwide, taking place between 2005 and 2007.



In recognition of gaps in UNHCR's approach, the Women's Commission has pushed for the broader inclusion of men and boys in promoting gender equality and published *Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality—A Resource Packet* ([http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/masc\\_res.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/masc_res.pdf)) to guide this. UNHCR has shared the resource packet with staff around the world as well as with NGOs, UN agencies and governments. The agency is now including it as one of its mainstreaming training tools, and plans to use it for masculinities training with staff and partners around the world in 2006.

Assisting UNHCR to succeed in this age, gender and diversity mainstreaming effort will result in:

- displaced women and children being regularly consulted about their needs by providing them with the opportunity to actively and meaningfully participate in decisions affecting their lives;
- the modification of existing programs and policies and the implementation of new ones based on refugee input in order for services to better meet the expressed needs of the refugee community;
- enhanced transparency and accountability of UNHCR and its partners to displaced persons;
- increased opportunities for women and children to benefit equally from assistance and services; and,
- improved protection for all refugees—particularly women and children.

### **Protecting displaced women and girls from trafficking**

Displaced women and children are at increased risk of being trafficked for commercial sex work and forced labor due to vulnerabilities linked to their displacement—fleeing conflict and persecution, economic desperation, inability to access asylum systems, the breakdown of community and familial support structures and the lack of security and legal protection in their places of refuge. The nexus between displacement and trafficking is little understood, resulting in a lack of awareness and few prevention activities. During 2004 and 2005, the Women's Commission undertook research in countries of origin, transit and destination (the United Kingdom, Thailand, Colombia and Ecuador, and the United States) to assess the risks displaced women and children encounter with regard to trafficking in order to help the international community better understand and respond. The resulting reports on the link between displacement

DISPLACEMENT INCREASES  
RISK OF HUMAN  
TRAFFICKING



and trafficking are the first of their kind to assess the overlap and risk factors in depth.

The Commission presented findings from its trafficking research at UNHCR's Pre-Executive Committee meeting in Geneva to NGO, government and UNHCR representatives.

Commission staff used the findings and recommendations to work with U.S. Congressional staff to draft legislation to strengthen the protection offered to victims of trafficking and address shortcomings in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. The Women's Commission also helped draft legislation designed to help save the lives of women and children at risk of harm overseas due to their gender or age, including widows and orphans. This law would enable vulnerable women and children to be identified for expedited processing and resettlement in the United States.

The Women's Commission is now drafting a synthesis report—collating conclusions and recommendations as well as detailing significant findings and lessons learned that have potential global ramifications beyond the four countries studied. Coupled with the synthesis report, the Women's Commission will develop a set of professional guidelines for protection policy and practice for donors and practitioners that provide critical guidance on how to address trafficking at the various stages of the displacement-trafficking cycle (displacement, trafficking and return/repatriation). Both the synthesis report and the guidelines will be broadly disseminated and used as advocacy tools to influence government policy, donor funding and practitioner approaches.

### **Keeping displaced women at the forefront of international dialogue and policy development**

#### *Protection Partners and the UN Millennium Development Goals*

The Women's Commission continued its partnership with the Afghan Women's Resource Center (AWRC), this year focusing on the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Adopted in 2000, the MDGs set targets for reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. The Women's Commission and AWRC co-hosted workshops on the MDGs in cities with high refugee, returnee and internally displaced populations—Peshawar (Pakistan), Kabul, Jalalabad and Herat (Afghanistan). The workshops brought together women's rights, human rights and humanitarian assistance groups, UN agencies and governments to consider ways for MDG strategies to better address the needs of displaced women and activities to ensure their inclusion. Many of the local organizations had not heard about the MDGs before the workshops and none of the participants had considered the particular needs of returning refugees—such as increased gender-based violence and insecurity, lack of income or the needs of refugees in Pakistan, such as lack of access to education and healthcare. Following the workshops, UNHCR Pakistan translated the



UN/government refugee agreement into local languages and used it in police trainings to reduce the harassment refugee women were experiencing from local authorities and citizens. In addition, the UN Development Program, which is responsible for implementing the MDGs in the UN system, expanded its Pakistan five-year plan to include attention to refugees' access to education and healthcare, and the Kabul representative included an NGO representative on the MDG working group to ensure attention is given to internally displaced and refugee women.



*"[S]uch conferences are great opportunities for activists, especially for those who are coming from such countries like Afghanistan, to upgrade their knowledge and strengthen their capacity."*

Partawmina Hashemee, director of Afghan Women's Resource Center, after the Beijing +10 conference.

Partawmina Hashemee, director of AWRC, was one of eight activists from around the world selected by the United Nations to participate in the UN conference to review progress in the decade since the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. Commonly referred to as "Beijing Plus 10," the session was also tied to advancement of the MDGs. Ms. Hashemee, nominated by the Women's Commission, was selected based on her work with internally displaced persons and returning refugees, as well as AWRC and the Women's Commission's innovative work using the MDGs as a tool for advocacy in refugee, returnee and displaced settings.

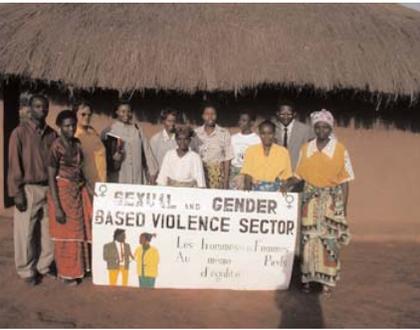
On return to Afghanistan and based on her experience at Beijing Plus 10, Ms. Hashemee established the Committee on the MDGs in Kabul. The Committee is a network of local groups that monitors implementation of the MDG workshop recommendations and other key international treaties, undertakes outreach to increase awareness of these commitments by government, and ensures the participation of returnee and displaced women in the monitoring and evaluation of international treaties.

In June, the Women's Commission addressed the UN General Assembly during hearings on UN reform and the MDGs, in preparation for the September UN Summit. Based on findings from workshops in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Women's Commission pointed to the lack of attention by UN agencies and governments to refugees and the internally displaced under the MDG framework. After the June hearings, the UN summit declaration (meant to guide commitments by the UN and Member States in implementing the MDGs) included reference to the needs and contributions of displaced populations—which had been missing in earlier versions.

### *UN Security Council resolution 1325: women, peace and security*

In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The Women's Commission was one of five NGOs advocating for the resolution, which calls for greater acknowledgement of the role and contributions of women in building peace, and sets out measures for the UN and member states to achieve this. The Women's Commission now monitors implementation of the resolution through membership on the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGO Working Group).

The Women's Commission, through the NGO Working Group,



pressed for the UN Security Council to hold a debate on gender-based violence prevention. The Commission nominated Shqipe Malushi, director of the Albanian-American Women's Association, as a panelist for the debate, where she highlighted concerns of displaced women in the Balkans in the post-conflict period.

The Women's Commission contributed to the NGO Working Group report on implementation of resolution 1325, which complemented the official UN Secretary-General's report, both released in October 2004. The alternative report, *Four Years On*, described the ways in which women's civil society organizations and networks have been using resolution 1325, and issued five recommendations for UN agencies and governments to advance its implementation. The recommendations include greater awareness-raising by UN agencies and civil society groups regarding the resolution, and extension of its application to refugee settings—as refugees are often left out of discussions and decisions around the resolution, which are limited within the borders of countries in conflict.

Refugee and displaced women's groups are applying the resolution as a means to hold the UN and governments accountable to women's rights. For example the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), a coalition of 70 women's groups, has used resolution 1325 to hold meetings with senior UN and government policy-makers, and to report on gaps in women's security in the post-conflict phase. The Women's Commission and the KWN met to discuss strategies for the KWN to enhance the impact of its work, such as broader distribution of its reports and other outreach at UN Headquarters.

### Promoting empowerment and self-sufficiency

The Protection and Participation Program is commencing work on the livelihoods of displaced populations with a specific emphasis on women and adolescents. The work will focus on enhancing the well-being of displaced women and adolescents by promoting comprehensive, sustainable livelihoods that meet real market needs and build on existing skills and experience. The work will also develop tools and guidelines to inform policy and practice in refugee and internally displaced contexts. The research and resulting publications, tools and advocacy are envisioned to change the way the international community designs and implements livelihood programs in order to better meet the economic needs of displaced populations, thereby enhancing self-reliance, improving protection and empowering communities.

For more on the work of the Protection and Participation Program, visit

<http://www.womenscommission.org/projects/P&P/index.shtml>

## Detention and Asylum

Since 1997, the Women's Commission has worked with a population unknown to many Americans—non-criminal immigrant women and children held in federal, local and county prisons by the federal government. Research by the Women's Commission uncovered poor treatment of both children and women seeking asylum which motivated policy makers and other advocates to create systemic reform to the treatment of these vulnerable populations. The Commission remains a leading advocate in changes to U.S. immigration and asylum laws, policy and practices, working with Congress, the administration and federal agencies.

### Unaccompanied children

With the support of several key government officials, including the Chief Judge of the Immigration Courts at the Executive Office for Immigration Review in the Department of Justice as well as the Director of the Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services in the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Women's Commission's Detention and Asylum Program created "What Happens When I Go to Immigration Court?" a short educational film aimed at orienting detained unaccompanied alien children to immigration court. This video provides the children with a vital overview of immigration court hearings which they need to understand as these hearings will determine their future. If children are better prepared for their hearings, they will experience less trauma and be better able to relate their stories, which will facilitate a system that works faster and more efficiently.

The Women's Commission was also successful in its advocacy to prevent an Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) policy that would have enabled it to share confidential information it received from children in its custody with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials. The Women's Commission was concerned that DHS might use this information in deportation proceedings against the children. Once this policy was understood, children would be reluctant to trust the ORR employees who cared for them, resulting in a lessened ability for ORR to provide appropriate care for the children.

### Women and children asylum seekers

Women's Commission staff, working in coalition, managed to defeat some of the most egregious anti-asylum provisions contained in the initial Real ID Act. These were expansion of expedited removal; additional hurdles for asylum seekers; depriving asylum seekers of judicial review; deportation to torture or indefinite detention; and deportation to places without a functioning government.



### Woman Fleeing Abuse Faces Asylum Battle in U.S.

Rodi Alvarado suffered years of terrifying abuse at the hands of her husband, including repeated rape and severe beatings. In 1995, she fled her native Guatemala and went to the United States where she was granted asylum in 1996. Her asylum was subsequently revoked and then re-granted. When former Attorney General Ashcroft moved to revoke her asylum again, the Women's Commission worked in coalition to prevent this. As a result of this advocacy, officials from the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement division, stated on the record that even if Rodi Alvarado were denied asylum, she would not be removed from the United States.



## Detention

Women's Commission staff serve as the secretary of the executive committee of the steering committee of the newly re-launched Detention Watch Network. The Commission is also a steering committee member of the International Coalition on Detention.

## Haiti

With political and civil unrest on the rise in Haiti, the Detention and Asylum Program worked with a coalition of religious, human rights and refugee groups to provide increased protections to Haitian asylum seekers and to temporarily halt the deportations of all Haitians living in the United States. The coalition met with representatives from the State Department, the National Security Council, UNHCR and the White House to explore protection options.

In February, program staff traveled, with representatives from the Brown University Medical Center and the International Rescue Committee, to the Dominican Republic to assess the conditions of Haitians in that country. They looked at the asylum system, health care and trafficking in women and children, and published a report with findings and recommendations.

Staff also co-chaired a conference in Washington on Haiti and served on a panel at the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Conference, discussing "How Should the United States Respond to the Continuing Haitian Crisis?"

For more on the work of the Detention and Asylum Program, visit

<http://www.womenscommission.org/projects/detention/index.shtml>

## Reproductive Health

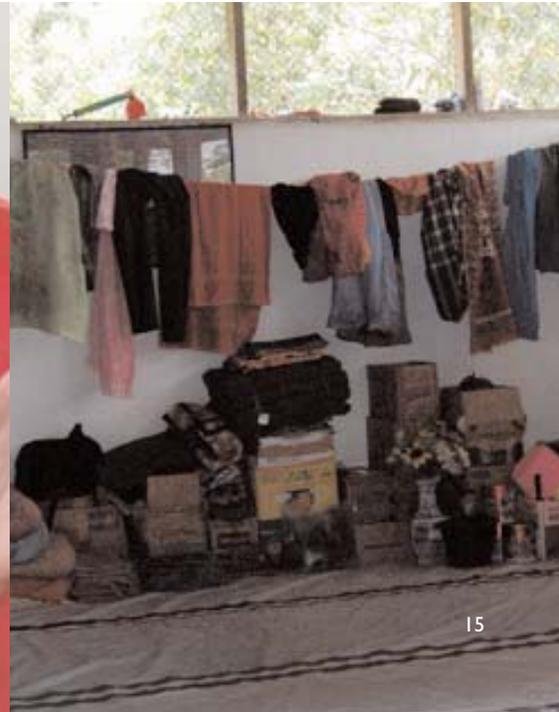
Forced displacement from homes, exposure to violence, poverty and separation from families and communities cause refugees and internally displaced people to face extraordinary difficulties that affect their reproductive health. They often lack sufficient protection, health care, education, livelihood and community support. They are more vulnerable to sexual violence by armed forces and others and face exploitation in the absence of traditional socio-cultural constraints.

The Women's Commission works to improve services in the four primary areas of reproductive health care: safe motherhood; family planning, including emergency obstetrics; gender-based violence; and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. The Women's Commission continues to work in collaboration with the Reproductive Health Response in Conflict (RHRC) Consortium, a group of seven international organizations working to improve access to reproductive health services for conflict-affected populations, and the Inter-agency Working Group (IAWG) on reproductive health in refugee settings to promote refugee and IDP men, women and adolescents' access to good quality reproductive health services.



### Responding to the Asian tsunami

Following the devastating tsunami in December 2004, the Women's Commission's Reproductive Health Program staff traveled to Aceh province, Indonesia to undertake an assessment of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for reproductive health. The MISP is a coordinated set of priority activities designed to prevent excess neonatal and maternal morbidity and mortality; reduce HIV transmission; prevent and manage the consequences of sexual violence; and plan for comprehensive



reproductive health services. The Women's Commission interviewed staff from local and international nongovernmental organizations and UN agencies, conducted focus groups with women, men and adolescents from the affected populations and visited health facilities to assess the access the population has to lifesaving reproductive health services.

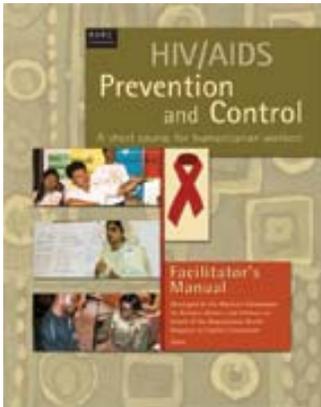
The mission's findings demonstrated that attention to and funding for reproductive health during the earliest days of an emergency can ensure that displaced populations have access to lifesaving reproductive health services. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had fielded a reproductive health focal point within one week of the tsunami and initiated working group meetings among the numerous local and international organizations and Indonesian health authorities. The Women's Commission recommended that all international organizations provide staff with a copy of the *Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, which include the MISRP, as part of their emergency deployment orientation and that all organizations providing services in the health sector address the reproductive health needs of the internally displaced population, prioritizing the MISRP.

### **Reproductive health for refugees still lacking in Darfur**

A Women's Commission mission to Darfur, Sudan, found both achievements and gaps in implementation of the MISRP more than 18 months into the crisis. Progress had finally been made in training humanitarian workers to provide clinical management for survivors of rape. However, in South Darfur, women and girls were suffering from complications of pregnancy and delivery as well as unwanted pregnancy due to rape and unsafe abortions. They were often not receiving basic emergency obstetric care in a timely or effective manner, resulting in approximately two to three deaths per week at the hospital. Many agencies appeared to be overly dependent on UNFPA for all reproductive health materials and supplies. The Women's Commission provided recommendations to the Chief of the Humanitarian Response Unit and two other key representatives at UNFPA, the lead reproductive health organization in Darfur. The Women's Commission identified funding to support three international NGOs (Relief International, Save the Children US and the American Refugee Committee) in each of the three states of Darfur to work with UNFPA focal points to coordinate implementation of the MISRP. All projects got off to a delayed start due to extreme security issues such as kidnapping and imprisonment of humanitarian actors, which resulted in staff recruitment challenges and the on and off withdrawal of agencies from the field. All three agencies have engaged reproductive health coordinators to initiate work with UNFPA to improve the MISRP response.



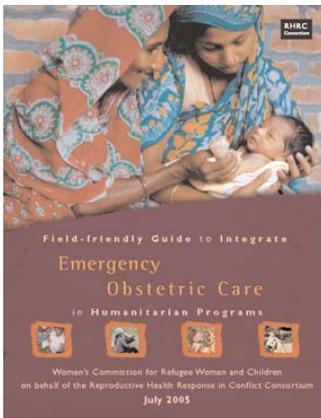
## Promoting HIV prevention in Pakistan and Thailand



In Peshawar, Pakistan, and Mae Sot, Thailand, the Women's Commission supported HIV/AIDS trainings conducted by local organizations. In Pakistan three local organizations working with Afghan refugees living in Pakistan—Frontier Primary Health Care (FPHC), Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and Bunyad Literacy Community Council—provided HIV/AIDS training for 96 local participants. In Thailand, three local organizations working with Burmese refugees and forced migrants from Thailand—Karen Education Working Group, Thai Youth Action Program and the Burmese Medical Association—provided HIV/AIDS training for 126 local participants, including representatives of other local NGOs.

The curriculum used in the training, *HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control: A Short Course for Humanitarian Workers* ([http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/hiv\\_manual.shtml](http://www.womenscommission.org/reports/hiv_manual.shtml)), was developed by the Women's Commission on behalf of the Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium, and pilot-tested in Islamabad and Bangkok in 2004.

## Emergency obstetric care: An essential element of reproductive health care



In any displaced population, approximately 20 percent of women of childbearing age will be pregnant; and 15 percent of pregnant women will suffer from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. It is impossible to predict which women will experience complications, making it urgent to ensure that all women have access to life-saving emergency obstetric care (EmOC). Although the number of programs offering general reproductive health services to conflict-affected people has increased substantially in the last decade and more organizations are providing EmOC services, there is no simple method to integrate EmOC into humanitarian programs. The Women's Commission developed *The Field-friendly Guide to Integrate EmOC into Humanitarian Programs* ([http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/EmOC\\_ffg.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/EmOC_ffg.pdf)) to assist organizations, program managers and field staff in humanitarian settings to address EmOC complications, thereby saving women's lives and preventing disabilities in conflict settings.

## Providing input at the international level

Reproductive health program staff participated in the Inter-agency Standing Committee Gender-based Violence (GBV) Working Group meeting to develop guidelines for addressing GBV in new emergencies. Staff were able to ensure that the new GBV guidelines support and complement the objectives of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) of reproductive health care in emergencies.



### **Preparing for further attacks on reproductive health**

The U.S. government has withheld funding for vital reproductive health programming and instituted detrimental policies affecting conflict settings. This has had a chilling effect among UN and nongovernmental agencies at the field and headquarters levels. The Women's Commission has initiated an advocacy campaign to combat any further rollbacks in reproductive health policy in conflict settings and to address filling the "decency gap" in funding. This campaign is also important to maintaining and strengthening awareness of and commitment to reproductive health for conflict-affected populations worldwide.

### **Global campaign to stop rape in war**

Reproductive health program staff, in collaboration with several UN agencies and other prominent NGOs, are participating in the development of a global campaign to stop rape in war. This initiative represents an important opportunity to generate increased commitment and action from a range of actors, including the UN, donors, civil society and governments.

For more on the work of the Reproductive Health Program, visit <http://www.womenscommission.org/projects/rh/index.shtml>

## New Project Aims to Reduce Rape during Fuel Collection

*"The danger is the same, near or far, but there's no wood nearby. When we are there getting the wood, local people sometimes take the girls' clothes off. And do bad things. The people wear green uniforms. Some have camels, some have horses. At the place where we get the firewood they tell us, 'Line up one by one.' They say, stand two by two and they take us off like that and then they rape us. Sometimes this happens until evenings. We have told the police, but the police say stay in your tent and nothing will happen."*

-- Women's Commission interview with refugee girls, Mille camp, January 2005

Many agencies have documented cases of women and girls being raped by government-sponsored militias while traveling out of displaced persons camps to collect vital fuel-wood for cooking and other household needs. Often, families are forced to choose between sending men, who are more likely to be killed, or sending women and girls who are "only raped."

The Women's Commission is launching a project to document the lack of coordination and absence of best practices regarding the provision of fuel; identify attempted solutions already in use; make recommendations and identify options, advantages and disadvantages for fuel alternatives and firewood collection methods in all phases of conflict-affected situations; and promote fuel solutions that protect women and girls in all phases of an emergency.



## Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict



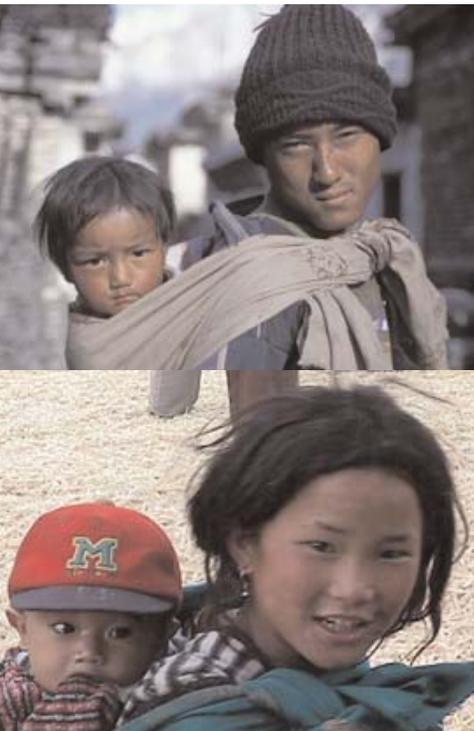
The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national and international nongovernmental organizations, enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Watchlist strategically collects and disseminates information on violations against children in conflicts in order to influence key decision makers to create and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children. Watchlist is housed at the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.

In January, Watchlist released *Caught in the Middle: Mounting Violations Against Children in Nepal's Armed Conflict* ([http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/np\\_wl.pdf](http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/np_wl.pdf)). It subsequently began its first Partnerships for Protecting Children in Armed Conflict (PPCC) project, in Nepal. The PPCC project brings together a working group of local, national and international organizations to monitor, report on and respond to specific violations against children's rights during conflict. The PPCC Working Group will focus on specific violations against children's right to education in four conflict affected districts in Nepal and will use this information to seek immediate and tangible remedies for the reported violations. The activities of the Working Group will be coordinated by a full-time staff person based in Kathmandu.

The UN Security Council adopted Resolutions 1539 and 1612 pertaining to children and armed conflict. Watchlist actively advocated with policy makers for increased child protection during conflict and worked closely with Security Council member states, concerned governments and other UN bodies in the creation of these resolutions, which build on key recommendations outlined in Watchlist policy papers *Protecting Children in Armed Conflict: Blueprints for Compliance* (January 2004), and *Violations Against Children in Armed Conflicts: An Action Plan for Monitoring, Reporting and Response* (October 2004).

Watchlist has implemented capacity-strengthening projects with local organizations in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Nepal. These projects aim to provide local organizations with technical and financial resources to gather, verify, report and disseminate information on violations against children in armed conflict and to advocate for programs and policies to protect children's security and rights.

For more about Watchlist, visit <http://watchlist.org/>





## Legislative Advocacy

In 2005, the Women's Commission worked on a variety of national legislation that would affect refugees and asylum seekers. Some highlights:

- Staff worked effectively with members of Congress to stop the transfer of immigration matters from the Senate Judiciary subcommittee to a new Senate subcommittee dealing with terrorism. The new subcommittee would likely have had a more enforcement-focused mentality, making it difficult to advocate for protections for refugee women and children.
- The Senate Appropriations Committee added language derived from the Women and Children in Armed Conflict Protection Act to the Foreign Operations appropriation bill. The language calls upon the Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration to dedicate additional resources to the protection of displaced women and children in regions of conflict.
- Staff worked with Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee's (D-TX) office to draft legislation that would improve the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which was first passed in 2000.
- The Women's Commission worked to garner support among new Senators for the Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2005. The bill would ensure that refugee children who enter the United States alone would be provided a guardian ad litem to look out for their interests, and legal counsel to represent them in court proceedings. The Act was passed in the Senate by unanimous consent.
- Language from the Widows and Orphans Act of 2005 was included in the Kennedy-McCain Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act. The language would create a new visa category and expedite entry into the United States for women and children at particular risk of harm (see box below). The Women's Commission worked to promote its passage in the Senate.

### Legislation Would Help At-risk Women and Children Find Safe Haven in the United States

Throughout their travels, Women's Commission staff have met many women and children who could benefit from legislation known as the Widows and Orphans Act. For example, in Pakistan, staff met "Bibi," a widow living in an urban refugee settlement. She knows that the community leaders are sexually abusing her children, but she is powerless to do anything about it. Because she has no income to pay rent, Bibi had arranged with the local Afghan community leader to live rent-free; it is this Afghan leader who is abusing her children. She suspects that the Pakistani government representative in charge of law enforcement in the settlement, a close friend of the Afghan leader, is also abusing her children.

As a widow with no money, Bibi is powerless to protect her children. If she reports this crime, she fears that she will be deported back to Afghanistan, where she has no means of survival.

Language taken from the Widows and Orphans Act of 2005, and included in key comprehensive immigration legislation, is designed to help at-risk women and children in such predicaments by identifying them and removing them as quickly as possible to the United States.

## Media

Women's Commission staff were quoted in a variety of media outlets this year, including the Associated Press, *The Washington Times*, *The Miami Herald*, *The San Diego Union Tribune* and *Tucson Weekly*. Women's Commission staff appeared on CNN's Wolf Blitzer Reports and CNN International's Your World Today. CNN and CNNI also used footage from the Women's Commission's January trip to the refugee camps in Chad in their reporting.

*The Miami Herald* published a Women's Commission op-ed, while *The New York Times*, *The Washington Times* and *The Guardian* (UK) ran letters to the editor from Women's Commission staff.

Several staff appeared on New York public radio throughout the year and were interviewed by Voice of America.

Articles by Women's Commission staff were published by *Forced Migration Review*, *Monday Developments*, *The Population Reference Bureau*, *Global Healthlink* and *The Interdependent*.

## Events

### Women's Commission celebrates 10 years of advances in reproductive health

At its May 12 Voices of Courage Awards luncheon the Women's Commission celebrated 10 years of advances in reproductive health for refugees. CBS News correspondent Lesley Stahl hosted the event and Allan Rock, Canada's Ambassador to the UN, gave the keynote speech.



Gertrude Garway received the Voices of Courage award for her gender-based violence prevention and response work in Liberia. As a refugee herself, Gertrude worked to advance the reproductive health of other refugee and internally displaced women in Guinea in the 1990s. Today she works as a program manager for the International Rescue Committee in her native Liberia. Sophia, a refugee from Burma, received the award for her work as the program manager of the reproductive health inpatient department at the Mae Tao Clinic in Mae Sot, Thailand. Sophia supervises a staff of 25 junior and senior health workers and trains traditional birth attendants, maternal child health trainees and other reproductive health staff. Dr. Win Myint Than accepted the award on Sophia's behalf, as she was unable to attend the luncheon due to the heavy demands of the clinic.

Ortho Women's Health, a unit of Ortho McNeil Pharmaceutical, Inc., received the corporate Voices of Courage award for its groundbreaking work in developing contraceptives. The Compton Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation were recognized for their long-term and ongoing support of reproductive health efforts for refugee and displaced populations.



## **Social events with a cause**

### *"Fifty and Fabulous"*

Jan Naegele and Pam Gervais celebrated their 50th birthdays and raised money for the Women's Commission at a party they hosted in April at the Eli Whitney Museum in New Haven, Connecticut. By asking friends to make a donation to the Women's Commission in lieu of gifts, the pair raised more than \$2,000. Women's Commission staff gave a brief talk on the Commission's work with Darfurian refugees and showed a short film about a recent visit to refugee camps in Chad.

### *"Salsa Fiesta Fundraiser"*

The Women's Commission was the beneficiary of the second "Salsa Fiesta Fundraiser" of the University of Arizona's Professional Women in Business Association. The Women's Commission provided information and photos for the social event. In addition to raising funds, the Salsa Fiesta raised awareness on the situation in Darfur, increased the Women's Commission's visibility in Arizona and piqued the interest of some aspiring businesswomen.



### **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation introduces the Women's Commission to new friends**

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation hosted a cultivation event for the Women's Commission in September. William G. Bowen, president of the Foundation, and Anne Tatlock, chair of the Mellon Foundation board, spoke about the great strides the Women's Commission has made over the years in improving policies and service delivery systems for refugee women and children affected by conflicts all over the world. John C. Whitehead, former chairman of the Mellon Foundation, and Carolyn Makinson, executive director of the Women's Commission, also spoke, and the evening's program closed with remarks by Grace Dunbar, a Women's Commission board member who is herself a refugee from Liberia. Grace brought a personal touch to the evening by recounting her story of fleeing the civil war in her country with her three children 12 years ago. The event, attended by more than 30 people, was an opportunity to thank existing supporters and meet new friends.

## STAFF

Carolyn Makinson, *Executive Director*

Shogufa Alpar, *Program Coordinator*

Dale Buscher, *Director, Protection and Participation Program*

Sarah Chynoweth, *Program Manager, Reproductive Health Program*

Mahlet Dessalegn, *Grants Specialist*

Mary Jane Escobar-Collins, *Officer of Board Relations and Operations*

Julia Freedson, *Director, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict*

Jessica Hansen, *Program Specialist, Communications and Development*

Alexandra Hardina, *DC Program Specialist*

Lori Heninger, *Director, Education in Emergencies Initiative*

Ramina Johal, *Senior Coordinator, Protection and Participation Program*

Tzvetomira Kaltcheva, *Program Specialist, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict*

Joanne Kelsey, *Director, Detention and Asylum Program*

Sandra Krause, *Director, Reproductive Health Program*

Megan McKenna, *Senior Coordinator, Media and Communications*

Samuel Owusu-Afriyie, *Accounting and Grants Officer*

Jenny Perlman, *Senior Coordinator, Education in Emergencies*

Clelia Peters, *Program Manager, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict*

Diana Quick, *Director of Communications*

Roxanne Saucier, *Program Manager, Communications and Development*

Michael Sidman, *Administrative Specialist*

Joan Timoney, *Director of Advocacy and External Relations*

Susan Vignola, *Development Officer*

The Women's Commission would like to thank the many volunteers, interns and consultants who worked with it in 2005.

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Sandra Sennett Tully

Guylene L. Viaud

Patricia Walker

Jo Ann Walthall

Melanie Wyler

\* Deceased

### In memoriam

In 2005 the Women's Commission lost former board member and commissioner Sandra Feldman. She will be missed for her work to improve the lives of children and young people, including refugees.

## DONORS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005 (\$500 and up)

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children is grateful to all the people and organizations who donated in FY2005, and would like to thank in particular the following foundations and institutional donors who gave more than \$500.

Advance Magazine Group	Grace Jones Richardson Trust	The Schlosstein-Hartley Family Foundation
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## ANNUAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

The following is a summary of the financial operations of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children for fiscal year 2005 (October 1, 2004 - September 30, 2005). This summary is based upon figures from the accounts and records prepared by the International Rescue Committee, which is classified as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is thus qualified for charitable contribution deductions. An independent audit of IRC's accounts, including those of the Women's Commission, is available upon request.

<b>Revenues</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>
Foundations	1,088,286	832,684
Individual Contributions	673,567	747,791
United Nations Grants	10,000	260,727
Government Grants	504,524	307,861
Special Events	450,743	339,551
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>2,727,120</b>	<b>2,488,614</b>

### Expenses

Asylum & Detention Program	173,729	162,225
Board of Directors Project	105,571	61,871
Children & Adolescents Program	181,695	279,245
Fundraising Project	323,666	287,798
General Advocacy Project	595,170	268,056
Protection & Participation Program	471,000	330,543
Public Education Project	159,841	145,909
Reproductive Health Program	613,085	1,346,971*
Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict	226,435	192,798
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>2,850,192</b>	<b>3,075,416</b>

\* In FY2004, a total of \$609,900 of the reproductive health expenses were in subgrants to Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium members and local nongovernmental organizations.

### Summary of Fund Balance Analysis

TYPE OF FUND	Balance End of FY2005	Balance End of FY2004	Change in Fund Balance
Endowment—Founders' Fund	231,869	186,922	44,947
General Unrestricted Funds	991,003	1,006,044	(15,041)
Temp. Restricted Program Funds*	648,406	751,383	(102,977)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,871,278</b>	<b>1,944,349</b>	<b>(73,071)</b>

\* Temporarily restricted program funds are foundation grants held for use in future years. The amount of these funds varies from year to year depending on the number and size of multi-year grants, and on their status in relation to the grantmaking cycle. Multi-year foundation grants appear as revenue in the year they are received, but may be expended over several subsequent years. Any annual shortfall in revenues versus expenses is covered either by unrestricted funds or by temporarily restricted funds and is reflected in the annual change in these fund balances.

## You can help!

As this report shows, the Women's Commission has had an incredibly busy and fruitful year, achieving victories for the protection and well-being of refugee women and children all around the world.

At the same time, in 2005 we witnessed the continuing genocide in Darfur, ongoing unrest in Iraq, the tragic aftereffects of the tsunami and new disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake in Pakistan. These are humbling reminders that while we should celebrate our hard-won successes in 2005, there will be much to do in 2006 to preserve these victories and to continue to advance the rights and protection of women, children and adolescents affected by conflict across the globe.

There are many ways you can make a contribution to the Women's Commission and demonstrate to refugee women and children that we remain committed to doing what we can to help them gain access to resources and opportunities that will allow them to provide for themselves and their families.

When you support the Women's Commission, you know that your donation will go to the displaced women and children whom we serve.

### *Individual contributions*

For information on making an individual tax-deductible contribution, including stock gifts and donations of goods, please contact Susan Vignola, Development Officer, at 212-551-3113 or [susanv@womenscommission.org](mailto:susanv@womenscommission.org).

You may also visit our website and make a donation online at [www.womenscommission.org](http://www.womenscommission.org).

Or you may send a contribution through the mail to: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children  
122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor  
New York, New York 10168-1289

### *Planned Giving*

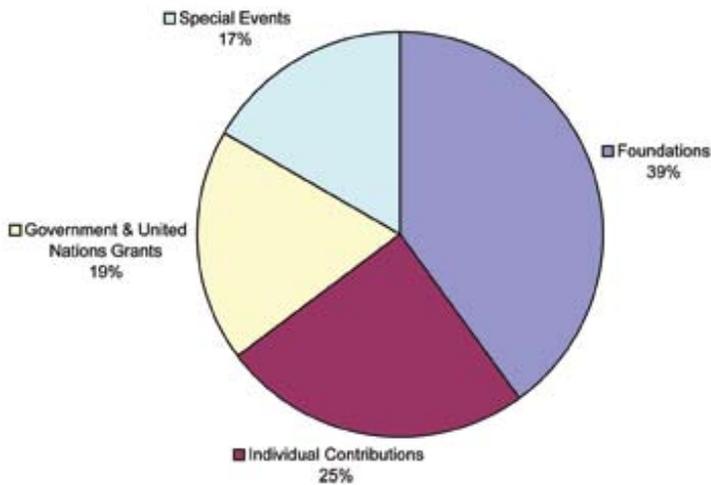
Remembering the Women's Commission in your estate will enhance our ability to provide a voice for refugee women and children for years to come. You can remember the Women's Commission in your will, or you can name the Women's Commission as a beneficiary of your life insurance, living trust or qualified retirement plan.

The legal designation is **Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children/International Rescue Committee, Inc.**, a New York charitable corporation located at **122 East 42 Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10168-1289**.

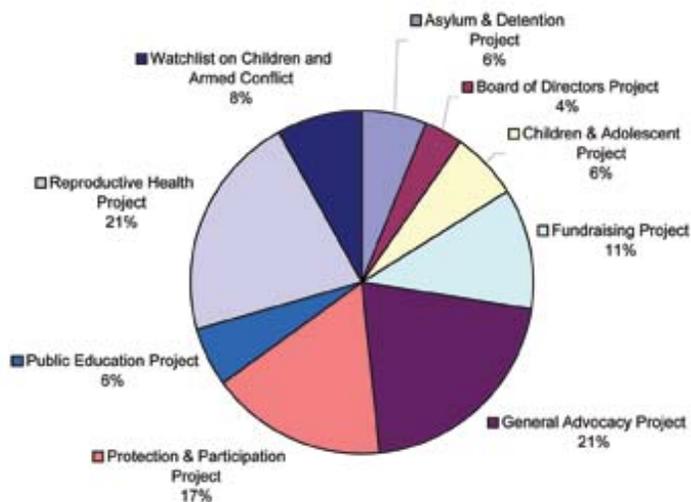
### *Gift ideas*

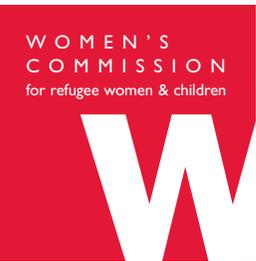
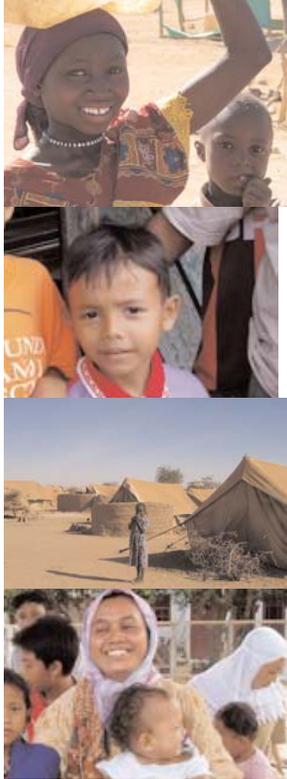
Donations to the Women's Commission make thoughtful gifts for friends and family. Support the Women's Commission through a gift of membership, or purchase a book or CD that supports the Women's Commission. Contact Roxanne Saucier 212-551-3088 for details.

FY 2005 Revenue



FY 2005 Expenses





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