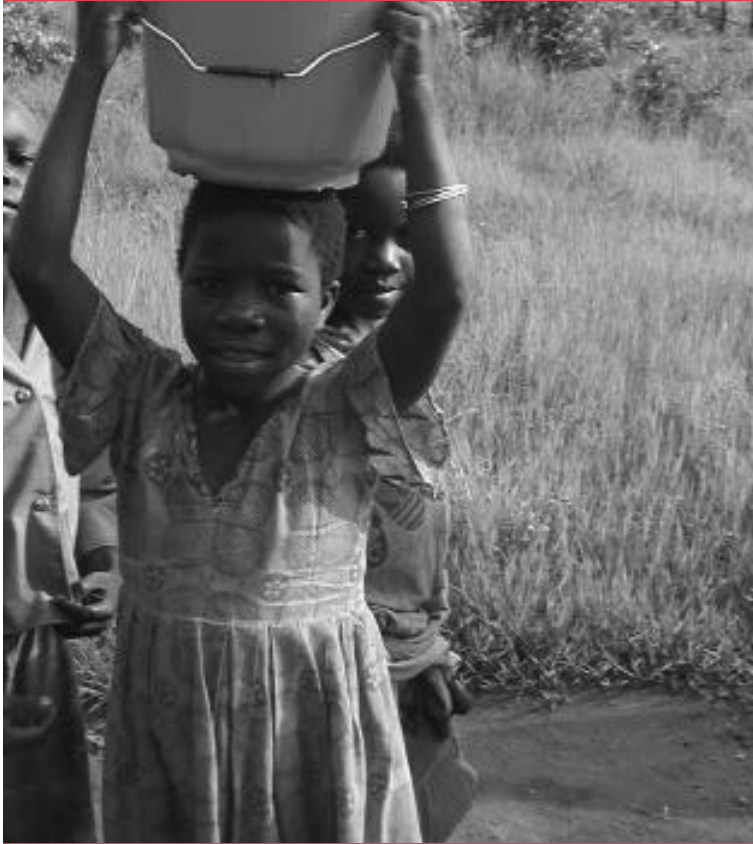


Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children



ANNUAL REPORT 2003

CONTENTS

Mission Statement	2
Letter	3
Asylum and Detention	4
Reproductive Health	6
Refugee Women as Partners in Protection	9
Children and Adolescents	11
Washington Legislation and Advocacy	13
Media and Events	15
Staff and Board	17
Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2003	18
Donors	19
How You Can Help	19

WOMEN'S
COMMISSION
for refugee women & children



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for Refugee Women and Children**

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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:

Over the last 14 years, the Women's Commission has gained a reputation for developing accurate and compelling statistics that reflect the dangers, rights abuses and challenges that face refugee women, adolescents and children on a daily basis.

In a world where UNHCR has data on only 45 percent of its beneficiaries, where information on the realities of life for internally displaced women and children is hard to find and where urban refugees count in the millions but are hidden from view, the importance of the Women's Commission's role in research and data collection is great.

Our case studies have helped support legislation by putting a human face on the refugee women and children who desperately need the protections provided by bills such as the Women and Children in Armed Conflict Protection Act and the Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act.

Our groundbreaking research sets movements in motion, as when, in 1994, we revealed the lack of reproductive health care for refugee women—and the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium was born. This year, we completed exhaustive research leading to a Global Survey on Education in Emergencies, a comprehensive look at how education is provided—or not—to children in conflict situations around the world. Accompanied by an extensive database, the report will serve as the basis to pressure the international community to put a priority on education for refugee and internally displaced children and adolescents.

In response to the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV), field research and survey tools will help humanitarian agencies and governments to respond more effectively to survivors, and to strengthen legislation and prevention efforts.

Of the many ways that we uncover data—through participatory research, delegations, staff missions and targeted subgrants—refugee women and youth are our most valued partners, ensuring that their realities are transmitted to the international community.

Successful advocacy depends on strong data. Thank you for helping the Women's Commission to document the truth about refugee women and children's lives—and to use the findings to create change.

Ellen Jorgensen
Acting Director

Kathleen Newland
Chair, Board of Directors

Asylum and Detention

Thousands of women and children arrive in the United States every year seeking safe haven from persecution in their homelands. Many, however, are detained pending resolution of their asylum cases, often for months or even years in harsh, punitive conditions in jails and detention centers. Heightened concerns about U.S. national security in the wake of September 11 have led to a dramatic escalation in the severe treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, resulting in further denial of due process, an increased use of detention in host countries and summary return to countries of origin.

In 2003, the Women's Commission continued to advocate for changes in U.S. law, policy and practice to ensure that women and children refugees are treated with dignity and afforded the protection they so desperately need.

Lives of refugee children in U.S. improve

As the result of a legislative effort led by the Women's Commission, responsibility for the care, custody and placement of unaccompanied children was transferred from immigration authorities to the Office of Refugee Resettlement on March 1, 2003. In the first few months following this dramatic change, ORR expanded foster care for such children, limited the use of juvenile jails to detain children and began discussions to increase legal and guardian *ad litem* services for unaccompanied children. The Women's Commission offered its expertise to government officials to help shape these reforms.

The Women's Commission also worked with key members of Congress to enhance the reforms through further legislation that would mandate the provision of counsel and guardians *ad litem* to children, require the development of standards for their care and establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure their safe return to their homelands if denied asylum. The Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2003 gained strong bipartisan support and was being considered by Congress at the time of this report.

Advocacy on behalf of Haitian refugees

In the past several years, human rights violations and political violence have escalated in Haiti. In response to this turmoil, the United States has implemented harsh new policies designed to prevent and deter the arrival of Haitian asylum seekers.

Following publication of its report, *Refugee Policy Adrift: The United States and Dominican Republic Deny Haitians Protection*, the Women's Commission took the lead in advocating for enhanced protection for Haitian refugees both in the United States and the Caribbean region. Its work led to the opening of a UNHCR office in the Dominican Republic to promote better protection in the region. The Women's Commission testified before a congressional briefing on behalf of Haitian women and children detained in Miami. It met

WOMEN'S COMMISSION ADVOCACY GETS RESULTS



TURMOIL IN HAITI



NO FUTURE IN HAITI

I don't have a future in Haiti. Haiti doesn't have a future. All the time there is violence, tires burning and people being beaten. I was almost killed. The next time that you call, I might be dead. I will do whatever it takes to get out.

The Women's Commission interviewed Rigmane Ovilma, a 22-year-old woman whom the INS deported in July 2002. Rigmane, who was in hiding in Haiti when the Women's Commission spoke to her, said that the INS picked her up at the Turner Guilford Knight detention center in Miami at 2:00 a.m. and handcuffed and shackled her on the way to the airport and throughout the government flight that took her back to Haiti.

The Haitian authorities took the returnees into custody at the airport in Port-au-Prince, photographed them and then took them to Delmas, a prison known for its extremely hazardous living conditions. Rigmane was held at Delmas for two days until her family was able to locate her. The prison officials forced the family to pay a large fine (approximately U.S. \$400) to obtain her release.

After her return to her family home, Rigmane and her family experienced significant abuse and harassment from government security forces. Her mother's restaurant was sprayed with gunfire. Police later stopped her and her brother-in-law after a street demonstration against the Lavalas government. The officers hit her on the back and chest with their rifles. She reported that her brother-in-law suffered more injuries, including a blow to the head. She was hospitalized after she began to spit up blood. She reported that she continues to spit up blood and that her throat hurts as a result of the attack.

Rigmane has since been in hiding and said that she is afraid to return to her home. She told the Women's Commission that she will likely try to flee Haiti again, as she fears for her life.

WORKING TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT



with the National Security Council and advocated for increased resettlement opportunities for Haitian refugees. The Women's Commission also helped develop an NGO coalition that is advocating for better treatment of Haitians in the United States.

Improving the U.S. resettlement system

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, the U.S. refugee resettlement system has been dramatically cut back, resulting in a more than 50 percent reduction of admissions. This has left thousands of refugees, many of them women and children, languishing overseas in precarious and unsafe circumstances.

The Women's Commission worked with Congress to craft the Widows and Orphans Protection Act of 2003, legislation that would enhance opportunities for women and children at risk of harm because of their gender or age to relocate to the United States. This act, which does not replace the resettlement system, has gained strong bipartisan support.

Monitoring conditions of detention

The Women's Commission sponsored a delegation of human rights and refugee experts to assess conditions of detention for women and children asylum seekers in southern California. In five facilities, the Commission documented a policy of mandatory detention for asylum seekers, implemented in response to September 11. It also found harsh conditions of confinement that resulted in such abuses as a lack of access to basic legal services, the separation of families and inadequate outdoor access.

The Women's Commission did follow-up advocacy to increase services to the women it visited.



IDENTIFYING GAPS IN REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



Reproductive Health

Lack of reproductive health care is a leading cause of death and disease among displaced women of reproductive age. In refugee situations, women, men and adolescents often do not have access to reproductive health services. The Women's Commission works to improve services in the areas of safe motherhood; family planning, including emergency obstetrics; gender-based violence; and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

Advocating for reproductive health services for Afghan refugees in Pakistan

Based on the work of the Women's Commission's reproductive health field representative in Pakistan, the Commission produced the report *Still In Need: Reproductive Health Care for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan*. Some of the major recommendations were to: increase coordination among UN, government, local and international organizations, particularly on the identification of standard protocols for reproductive health service delivery; place a reproductive health focal point within each agency; establish comprehensive community education on reproductive health issues; and support local women's, men's and youth groups to address reproductive health needs in the community. The Women's Commission has advocated on these issues with the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, UNHCR, UNFPA, the Project Directorate Health and international and local organizations in Pakistan.

EMPOWERING YOUNG MOTHERS WITH LITERACY AND INCOME-GENERATING SKILLS

Acts of gender-based violence have been a defining characteristic of armed conflicts in western Africa. The recent escalation of fighting in Liberia has continued this pattern of abuse, which strikes teenage girls and single mothers. Large numbers of teenage mothers, abandoned by family members and husbands, are particularly vulnerable.

With the support of the Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury Fund, the International Rescue Committee/Liberia was able to respond with the "Young Mothers Empowerment Program." Now in its second year, the program works with 150 young mothers (ages 14 - 20) to improve their reproductive health by providing awareness-raising meetings, counseling and peer educator trainings. The program also promotes economic self-reliance by providing basic literacy training and training in income-generating skills and by supporting the implementation of small business projects.

"I am thankful to the program, as it has touched all aspects of my life," said one participant. "I was taught how to take care of myself as a woman, and I will fully take part in skills training. Doing so will help me to be independent. I will not depend on men for my needs."

ADOLESCENTS NEED
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
CARE, TOO

Supporting the reproductive health needs of conflict-affected adolescents

Since 2000, the Women's Commission's Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury Fund has provided almost \$200,000 and leveraged other donors to support 36 grants to 33 local and international organizations in 20 countries. A wide variety of projects has included the training of peer educators in Kosovo, the provision of locally made sanitary supplies to Angolan refugee girls in Zambia and the support of literacy for the empowerment of young mothers in Liberia.

Training humanitarian workers to address HIV/AIDS

The Women's Commission field-tested an HIV/AIDS training course for humanitarian workers in Freetown, Sierra Leone and Nairobi, Kenya. The field-testing highlights the most important aspect of the course: changing the attitude among participants toward the problem of HIV and people living with HIV/AIDS. The final version of the training manual will be available in early 2004.

“I always felt there is no hope for those infected but the training changed this in me. I will be able to help those infected and affected in living positively—a chance they may not have had.”

Participant, Nairobi HIV/AIDS training



WORKING TOGETHER TO
IMPROVE REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH FOR REFUGEES



Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium

The Women's Commission continues to coordinate the seven-member Reproductive Health Response in Conflict (RHRC) Consortium. Led by the Women's Commission, the Consortium conducted an organizational assessment and strategic planning process to refine its goals and explore strategies to address them most effectively. The group revised its mission statement and changed its name from the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium to the Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium to more accurately describe the Consortium's concern for all populations affected by armed conflict, not just refugees. The report *Renewing International Commitment to Reproductive Health for Conflict-affected Populations* highlights the work of the RHRC Consortium over the last eight years and outlines its strategies for the future.

HALF OF ALL WOMEN IN EAST TIMOR EXPERIENCED GBV



The Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium's population-based survey to measure GBV in conflict-affected settings was field-tested in East Timor in 2003. One quarter of the 288 women surveyed reported exposure to psychological and physical violence perpetrated by non-family members during the violence that followed East Timor's 1999 vote for independence. Almost half of all the women surveyed who were in relationships reported some form of intimidation and control, verbal abuse, physical assault or sexual violence by their partner. These findings were used to inform parliamentary discussions on new domestic violence legislation.



Gender-based Violence Initiative

The gender-based violence (GBV) research officer facilitated the first-ever national population-based GBV research in Rwanda and conducted similar work among internally displaced women on Colombia's Caribbean coast. She also undertook research in Kosovo and East Timor.

The RHRC Consortium developed and field-tested a *Communication Skills in Working with Survivors of GBV: A Five-day Training of Trainers Manual*, designed to assist humanitarian agencies to work more effectively and supportively with GBV survivors.

Preventing Death and Illness among Mothers

The RHRC Consortium's emergency obstetric care technical adviser, managed by the Women's Commission, conducted a final assessment of 12 project sites implemented by three RHRC Consortium members that the project has supported over a two-year period. Findings showed major improvements in facilities infrastructure, human resource availability and technical capacity, as well as increased collaborative partnerships and new funding, resulting in significant improvements in the quantity and quality of these vital services to prevent maternal death and disability.

More on RHRC Consortium activities can be found at www.rhrc.org.

LIFE-SAVING SERVICES SAVE WOMAN'S LIFE



A 36-year-old Afghan woman living in a refugee camp in Pakistan was brought into the camp's minor operating theater late at night by her husband. She was bleeding profusely and was hemorrhaging and in a state of shock. The midwife on duty examined her and diagnosed an incomplete abortion. The woman was given intravenous fluids and the abortion completed properly. She was kept overnight in the operating theater. Her condition improved and she was discharged the next morning. If treatment for incomplete abortion had not been available on-site in the camp, this woman might have died by the time she had reached a hospital. Her life was saved through the services provided by a member of the RHRC Consortium.

Refugee Women as Partners in Protection

AT WORK IN THE FIELD

Protection Partners: Building bridges with local advocates

The Women's Commission is expanding the understanding of how to engage the power of local women's groups and networks in conflict settings. These groups monitor conditions and investigate rights abuses—and use the information to influence the way organizations and decision makers are working. The Women's Commission uses its own networks to help partners gain access to decision makers.

In **Sierra Leone**, the Women's Commission's local partner, Binta Mansaray, advised the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding draft legislation on the protection of refugees. As the nation turned toward refining and introducing national laws after a 10-year civil war, she pushed for inclusion of the rights of returning refugees and internally displaced populations in Sierra Leone's Refugee Act. These populations, which are overwhelmingly women and children, were not included in national legislation that would have helped them benefit from special programs and funding.

In **Colombia**, the Women's Commission's partner organization is Maria Maria, a collective of Colombian women pushing to end the violence against internally displaced women and children. The Women's Commission is working with Maria Maria to develop advocacy messages and effective strategies to approach UN and government agencies to improve programs and policies.

In **Afghanistan and Pakistan**, the Women's Commission's protection partner, Afghan Women's Resource Center, identified serious rights violations, including trafficking of children, detention of women and the exploitation of Afghan refugee brick kiln workers. AWRC released a report on the exploitation of brick kiln workers, *Life of Brick Kiln Workers: An Ignored Segment of Our Society*, which the Women's Commission helped distribute to policy makers and the media.

The Women's Commission is also building bridges among our partners in Afghanistan and Pakistan. For example, AWRC is now part of UNHCR's regular protection meetings along with international NGOs and key UNHCR staff, working to identify and investigate rights abuses and protection needs of refugees.

Women's Commission boosts the voices of Afghan women

The Women's Commission joined forces with the U.S.-based Advocacy Project to strengthen the outreach of the Afghan Women's Network. As a result, AWN now has a communications strategy, a female journalists training program, links to international media and its own website. With help from the Women's Commission's project, AWN held its first press conference in Kabul on international women's day, March 8, 2003. It has graduated two classes of young Afghan refugee women journalists in Peshawar, Pakistan. AWN's demands for greater security were



GIVING GRANTS TO
IMPROVE WOMEN'S LIVES



covered by the Associated Press and received a great deal of media coverage when 1,000 women rallied in the women's park in August and submitted their petition to President Karzai. This was a huge step in the Women's Commission's ongoing efforts to "bring the voices" of refugee women to the rest of the world.

The Afghan Women's Fund

The Women's Commission's Afghan Women's Fund (AWF) continued to advocate on behalf of refugee and returnee Afghan women and to make grants to improve their lives. It is increasingly difficult for Afghan women's groups to get funds, especially in Pakistan, since many international NGOs and donors have withdrawn. Women's Commission grants continue to support Afghan women and children remaining in the country; many are widows and the very poor who have nowhere to go back to in Afghanistan, or no way to survive if they return.

Between January and August 2003, the AWF made grants totaling more than \$43,000. Groups supported included the Afghan Women's Network, Afghan Women Welfare Department and the Primary School of Hope. With the grants, groups ran schools, provided classes for women and girls and helped establish offices for local women's groups.

Pushing the agenda on women, peace and security

In August, the Women's Commission took on interim leadership of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. As acting coordinator, the Women's Commission worked on plans to promote UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. It pushed the Security Council and UN agencies to make decisions based on women's and children's needs and to see peace and security from their perspectives. The Women's Commission was able to give input into the Security Council's delegation to West Africa and highlighted issues for it to examine, such as the lack of shelter for refugee women in Sierra Leone and the related health and other implications. The Commission also pressed the Security Council to encourage the Sierra Leonean government and the UN to pay attention to women's housing, inheritance and property rights.

Read copies of all Women's Commission reports at www.womenscommission.org

Children and Adolescents



ADOLESCENTS PUT ADVOCACY INTO ACTION

In its fourth year, the Children and Adolescents Project continued to promote the protection and capacities of young people in emergencies and post-conflict situations. The Women's Commission can claim strong victories in increased and improved policy and programs for young people. Young people have become more active in advocating for themselves, drawing the attention of the international community, policy makers, funders, non-governmental partners and other young people to fully realize the dreams and rights of children, adolescents and youth affected by armed conflict. Their work has shown that young people's strengths, particularly those of girls, must be transformed into constructive leadership.

Young people influence United Nations Security Council

In January 2003, four Sierra Leoneans who served as adolescent researchers in the Women's Commission's participatory study, *Precious Resources: Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone*, addressed the UN Security Council in New York. As a result of this advocacy, the Security Council resolution on children and armed conflict (SC resolution 1460) incorporated their recommendations on HIV/AIDS and sexual violence and exploitation, which will apply to all situations where children and adolescents are affected by conflict. The resolution "notes with concern all the cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children, especially girls, in humanitarian crises, including those cases involving humanitarian workers and peacekeepers," and requests countries to incorporate core principles to prevent exploitation into codes of conduct and to develop appropriate disciplinary and accountability mechanisms. It also requests additional funding and programming for HIV/AIDS education and services.



Young people played a central role in the war in our country. We now want to help build peace. We are calling on the international community and the government of Sierra Leone to work with us, not just for us, in rebuilding Sierra Leone. Our research work shows we can work successfully with adults. We want more opportunities to show that when we are given responsibilities and the skills to meet them, our communities will improve dramatically. Despite all of our problems, young people are united in our desire for peace and education. Our generation wants peace. With more support, we will build this peace."

Samai Brima, teenage researcher for the Women's Commission, Sierra Leone, addressing the United Nations in New York

Continued advocacy with youth groups in northern Uganda

2003 marked a horrific year for adolescents and their families in northern Uganda. By the end of September, the rebel Lord's Resistance Army had carried out more than 8,000 abductions and the situation remains precarious. The Women's Commission continued its advocacy for the protection of young people in the region with agencies. It worked to further develop strategies and focus on key issues identified in its 2001 report *Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents, Promoting the Protection and Capacity of Ugandan and Sudanese Adolescents in Northern Uganda*. The Women's Commission worked with youth groups and helped them examine how they can strengthen constructive partnerships with adults and adult-run organizations in the region, as well as how to develop advocacy plans and create processes to monitor and evaluate their advocacy work. Lessons learned from this work are used to inform global policy discussions focused on young people and to improve local northern Ugandan services that support young people.



ORACLE - Education for Adolescents in Northern Uganda

As the result of Women's Commission advocacy efforts, the U.S. Department of Labor provided \$3 million for Opportunities for Reducing Adolescent and Child Labor Through Education (ORACLE) in northern Uganda. The project is a significant accomplishment in the Commission's advocacy work for increased attention to education in emergencies. ORACLE works to prevent the use of child soldiers in northern Uganda by improving access to quality education. Specifically, it addresses community awareness of and attitudes toward the educational and developmental needs of children. Its programs include the reception and reintegration of formerly abducted children, psychosocial assistance, formal and non-formal education, curative and preventive health, HIV/AIDS prevention and income-generating activities.



Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

The influence of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict has grown significantly in the past year. The Watchlist, an NGO network based at the Women's Commission, monitors and reports on violations against the security and rights of children in specific conflict situations. The Watchlist creates in-depth country reports and urges action by the United Nations, national governments and other policy makers. In 2003, the Watchlist published comprehensive reports on Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan, and presented a briefing paper on Liberia to the UN Security Council.

As the Security Council was considering plans for peace and reconstruction in Liberia, the Women's Commission, in collaboration with and as a member of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, gave it a set of recommendations to be included in SC resolution 1509, which established a UN peacekeeping force in Liberia.

Watchlist reports and further information are available at www.watchlist.org.

SEARCHING FOR JUSTICE IN SIERRA LEONE

Binta Mansaray was the Women's Commission's country representative and protection partner in Sierra Leone for two years until March 2003. This remarkable woman helped to galvanize local humanitarian and rights groups to form a coalition that monitors and advocates for the needs of Liberian refugees. She addressed the United Nations as it examined the passing of Security Council resolution 1460 on the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Binta produced reports on the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Sierra Leone and on the first national elections held after 10 years of civil war. She also worked with the organization WITNESS to produce the film *Operation Fine Girl: Rape Used as a Weapon of War in Sierra Leone*, the first and only documentary about the pervasive reality of sexual violence during war. After the film's premiere, the police asked Binta to work with them to use the videotape as a training tool for new recruits locally and to sensitize individuals in positions of power. Hundreds of people crowded the main square in the town to watch the documentary projected onto a large screen. One boy asked if the video could be screened again for a group of former child combatants, and girls came forward to ask questions, share experiences and ask for acceptance by the community. Binta is now a national figure raising greater awareness for the special court addressing war crimes in Sierra Leone.



Washington Legislation and Advocacy



The events of September 11, 2001 brought refugee and asylum issues to the forefront in Washington, D.C. to a degree perhaps never before seen. Even in the face of increased national security concerns, the Women's Commission continued to make significant progress in advancing the serious protection issues confronting refugee women, children and adolescents with Congress, the Department of State and other Washington-based policymakers.

The Women and Children in Armed Conflict Protection Act

As a result of strong advocacy from the Women's Commission and others, Congress introduced the Women and Children in Armed Conflict Protection Act. This critical legislation would support new initiatives to promote equal access to basic services for displaced women and children and it would require the U.S. government to develop an integrated strategy for protecting women and children during all stages of conflict. It would also designate a protection coordinator to oversee such efforts. At the time this report went to print, a version of the legislation was incorporated into the foreign operations appropriations bill and was expected to pass Congress.

The Widows and Orphans Act

The Women's Commission worked with Congress to craft the Widows and Orphans Act of 2003, legislation that would enhance relocation opportunities for women and children at risk of harm because of their gender or age. The bill protects widows and young girls who are subjected to gender-based violence, including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution and forced marriage. It also provides protection for orphans from sexual exploitation and recruitment as child soldiers. This act has gained strong bipartisan support.

The Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act

The Women's Commission worked with key members of Congress to develop legislation that would mandate the provision of counsel and guardians *ad litem* to unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the United States. The legislation, which was introduced by Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) in the House of Representatives and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) in the Senate, would require the development of standards for their care, and establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure their safe return to their homelands if denied asylum. The Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2003 gained strong bipartisan support and was being considered by Congress at the time of this report.





Improving U.S. efforts to enhance protection of refugee women and children

The Women's Commission's Washington Office played a critical role in raising within the U.S. government the profile of the protection needs of refugee women and children. For example, Commission staff participated in the training of the government-sponsored Disaster Assistance Response Team that was sent to assess relief needs on the ground in Iraq. Staff were also instrumental in bringing about the creation of an Abuse Prevention and Response Unit in the Office of Transition Initiatives within the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Educating Congress about critical refugee protection needs

The Women's Commission's Washington office participated in a congressional staff delegation to West Africa. The delegation, which included high-level staff from both parties, witnessed firsthand the many challenges that refugee women and children confront on a daily basis. Through the delegation, the Women's Commission was able to build congressional support for its legislative initiatives. The Women's Commission also briefed the Congressional Human Rights Caucus about its findings from the trip.



Women's Commission website spurs advocacy

The Women's Commission website, www.womenscommission.org, contains a vast amount of information about the work of the organization, including information about projects; delegation and issue reports; press releases; and ways to donate to the Women's Commission. It also provides opportunities for advocating on important issues; with the press of a few keys, visitors to the site can send a message to key decision makers asking them to take action. To use this feature, click on the "Take Action" box on the Women's Commission website.

Media

The Women's Commission received significant coverage as an expert resource on numerous issues, including the situation of unaccompanied refugee children in U.S. detention, family reunification, Haitian refugees, changes in immigration policy, child soldiers, Sierra Leone, northern Uganda, gender asylum and reproductive health.

Women's Commission staff were quoted in a wide variety of newspapers, magazines and wire service stories nationwide, including *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Miami Herald*, *Marie Claire* and the Associated Press. Staff were also interviewed on television and radio shows including: National Public Radio, Marketplace, CNN International, Univision and Voice of America. The Commission was instrumental in getting our advocacy partner in northern Uganda, Angelina Atyam, on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. The Women's Commission also initiated a profile of Ms. Atyam in *The New York Times*.

The Lancet, *Forced Migration Review*, *Global Healthlink*, *Conflict Trends* and *Monday Developments* published articles by Women's Commission staff. Letters to the editor from Women's Commission staff appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Times* (of London), *The Guardian* and *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Events

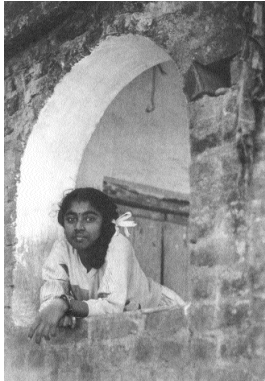
From Fear to Freedom: Protecting the Rights of Asylum Seekers in the United States

At its Voices of Courage Awards luncheon, the Women's Commission honored two asylees and two organizations that are working to protect the rights of asylum seekers in the United States. Emmy- and Tony-award winning actress Stockard Channing hosted the event.

The awardees were Aster Kidane, a refugee advocate who fled war in Ethiopia and runs a program that arranges for volunteers to visit asylum seekers who are being held in detention in the New York area; Edwin Muñoz, a 16-year-old Honduran boy who was in U.S. detention for more than six months and testified on Capitol Hill during a Senate hearing on detention of unaccompanied children asylum seekers; Latham & Watkins, a leading law firm that specializes in *pro bono* representation of unaccompanied refugee children; and *The Miami Herald*, which has consistently highlighted asylum and detention-related concerns.

The luncheon raised almost \$320,000. Among the major sponsors were Gail Furman, JP MorganChase & Co., Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, Evercore Partners and Latham & Watkins.





Photographs Raise Funds

Joan Almond's photography is a record of her travels around the world, to places such as India, Egypt and Jerusalem. At an exhibition of her platinum prints at the June Bateman gallery in January, Almond held an opening reception to benefit the Women's Commission. She donated proceeds from sales that evening, as well as sales to Women's Commission supporters throughout the show.

A Masquerade Ball on Behalf of Iraqi Women and Children

When the war in Iraq seemed imminent, friends Phoebe Schreiner and Marci McLendon decided to raise money to support Iraqi women and children refugees by hosting a masquerade ball, with all proceeds to benefit the Women's Commission. They secured a space, publicized the event and got food and drinks donated at cost from local establishments. The evening event included costumes, live performances, a DJ and a talk by Women's Commission reproductive health project director Sandra Krause. Donations from guests raised hundreds of dollars for Women's Commission programs.

Waking Kya: Performing for the Women of Sierra Leone

When writer Siobhan Fitzpatrick learned about the work of the Women's Commission, she decided she wanted to contribute her creative skills to raise funds. She researched the decade-long conflict in Sierra Leone and the consequences it still has for women and children in the post-conflict period.

Siobhan wrote and directed a performance piece, *Waking Kya*. She also recruited volunteer dancers, an actor and choreographer, and found a space for the show. The compelling performance consisted of a young woman's monologues, interspersed with interpretive dance compositions. The performance garnered attention in the local press and on CNN, and raised thousands of dollars for an income-generation project in Sierra Leone.



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The Women's Commission would like to thank the many volunteers, interns and consultants who worked with it in 2003.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003

The following is a summary of the financial operations of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children for fiscal year 2003 (October 1, 2002 - September 30, 2003). 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.

Revenues	2002	2003	
Foundations	1,772,174	1,499,147	
Individual Contributions	912,473	1,061,148	(1)
United Nations Grants	217,363	433,840	
Government Grants	1,279,429	290,968	
Special Events	481,143	340,938	
Total Revenue	4,622,582	3,626,041	(2)
 Expenses			
Afghan Women Campaign	169,059	176,820	
Asylum & Detention Project	153,177	160,228	
Board of Directors Project	43,343	45,098	
Children & Adolescents Project	413,861	320,542	
Fundraising Project	228,346	230,973	
General Advocacy Project	552,608	310,930	
Protection & Participation Project	255,457	238,798	
Public Education Project	165,863	152,175	
Reproductive Health Project *	1,958,281	1,372,170	(3)
Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict	54,751	82,020	
Total Expenses	3,994,746	3,089,754	
Excess of revenue over expenses	667,837	536,286	
Beginning fund balance	1,467,561	2,135,397	
Ending fund balance	2,135,397	2,671,683	(4)

Notes:

(1) Total Individual Contribution (1,061,148) for FY2003 consists of all the individual contributions including contributions to the Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury Fund and the Afghan Women's Fund.

(2) The total revenue of \$3,626,041 for fiscal year 2003 includes \$927,385 in multi-year grants received in FY 2003 restricted for future project use.

(3) A total of \$563,683 of the Reproductive Health expenses were in subgrants to Consortium members and local organizations.

(4) The ending fund balance for fiscal year 2003 includes a total of \$185,731 from the Founder's (Endowment) Fund, \$715,500 from individual donations and special events, \$1,770,452 from various foundations and private grants. These balances are designated for specific projects' use in future years.

* Total revenue and expenses from Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury Fund for the fiscal year amounted to \$28,239 and \$94,827 respectively.

DONORS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003

October 1, 2002 to September 30, 2003 (\$500 and up)

American Cathedral in Paris	Armed Conflict
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation	The McKnight Foundation
Anonymous (2)	Mertz Gilmore Foundation
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	Miles to Go Inc.
Blue Oak Foundation	Milestone Capital Management
Brill Media Ventures, LP	The Moriah Fund
Brune & Richard LLP	National Philanthropic Trust
Canadian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade	Neidich Foundation
Columbia University, Heilbrunn Department of Population and Family Health at the Mailman School of Public Health	New York Community Trust
Compton Foundation, Inc.	The Nightingale-Bamford School
Connemara Fund	Oak Foundation
C/S Group	Odegard, Inc.
The David and Lucille Packard Foundation	Open Society Institute
The Deborah & Ned Stiles Fund	The Orentreich Family Foundation
The Dominican University of California	Patricia Evert Productions
The Dye-Knopf Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation	The Paul and Edith Babson Foundation
Evercore Partners	Peace Tales
The Faye and Mike Richardson Charitable Trust	Pfizer Foundation
The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme	Pomegranate, Inc.
Ford Foundation	Reebok Human Rights Foundation
Garfinkle-Minard Foundation, Inc.	Religious of the Sacred Heart
Goldberg/Nash Family Foundation	Richards, Spears, Kibbe & Orbe
Grantham, Mayo, Van Otterloo & Co. LLC	The Robert & Bethany Millard Charitable Foundation
The GreenPoint Foundation	Robert & Suzanne Cochran Family Foundation
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The Henphil Pillsbury Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation	School Sisters of Notre Dame
Hogan & Hartson, LLP	Strachan & Vivian Donnelley Foundation
Hyperion	Summit Charitable Foundation, Inc.
The Inner Circle	Swiss Government, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
Jewish Community Foundation - Glazer Charitable Fund	Tamra Gould and Howard Amster II Philanthropic Fund of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland
J.M. Furman Foundation	Third World Handcrafts Shoppe
Jonathan Rose & Company	Tides Foundation
The J.M. Kaplan Fund, Inc.	UK Government, Department for International Development
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation	United Nations Foundation
Karma Foundation	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
King's Fountain	United Nations Population Fund
Kramer Spellman, L.P.	United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
Latham & Watkins, LLP	USAID, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
Linden Productions	West End Collegiate Church
JP Morgan Chase	The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Leadership Council on Children and	Working Assets Funding Service

How you can help

The plight of the world's 35 million refugees is overwhelming. The numbers are impossible to grasp. But through your support of the **Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children**, you have shown the world that refugees are not anonymous victims—that they are resilient, courageous and determined.

Individual Contributions

For information on making individual donations, including stock gifts, please contact Ellen Jorgensen, director of administration and resource management, at 212. 551. 3115 or ellen@womenscommission.org. You can also visit our website at www.womenscommission.org

Send your tax-deductible contributions to:
Women's Commission
for Refugee Women and Children
122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10168-1289

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Providing for the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 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 for Refugee Women and Children 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 42nd Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10168-1289.

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WOMEN'S
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