

2018

Vision

Our vision is a world in which refugee and internally displaced women, children, and youth are safe, healthy, and self-reliant; have their human rights respected and protected; and inform and drive their own solutions and development.

Mission

Our mission is to improve the lives and protect the rights of women, children, and youth displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice.

How We Achieve Change: Research. Rethink. Resolve.

Our work begins in the community. We listen to displaced people, learn about their needs and capacities, and identify, with them and local partners, potential solutions to the challenges they face. We develop tools and guidance, and provide technical assistance to bring about needed improvements in humanitarian response; and advocate with donors, policy makers and practitioners to ensure that recommendations are institutionalized and implemented across the globe.



For nearly 30 years, the Women's Refugee Commission has worked to ensure that the needs and priorities of women, children, and youth displaced by conflict and crisis are firmly on the humanitarian agenda.

However, the changing nature of displacement—increasingly urban and protracted, coupled with a growing demand and over-stretched resources—means we must rethink the way we traditionally respond to humanitarian crises. To improve efficiency and effectiveness, the response must be driven by those closest to the crisis, including the affected populations themselves. It must build on the strengths, capacities, and coping strategies of displaced women, children, and youth.

Shifting humanitarian response from the traditional needs-based model to one that is strengths-based—one that engages with communities directly to identify and leverage people's skills and capacities to develop and implement solutions—will result in higher quality, more inclusive, and more sustainable services and programs that embrace the concepts of dignity and self-determination. It will also bolster individual and community-level resilience to future shocks.

At the same time, we must focus on gender equality, which is central to ensuring an effective, inclusive, and rights-based response to conflicts and crises. Gender equality programming has been demonstrated to increase access to services and assistance, including education and sexual and reproductive health services, for women and girls; improve the participation, agency, and decision-making power of women and girls in their relationships, households, and communities; and decrease security risks, including the risk of gender-based violence.

For these reasons, we have put gender equality and resilience at the heart of the Women's Refugee Commission's new five-year strategic plan. This report highlights some of our work at the global, national, and community levels to advance gender equality and bolster individual and community-level resilience.

We are committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure that refugees are safe, healthy, and self-reliant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Sarah Costa". The script is fluid and cursive.

Sarah Costa
Executive Director

DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT, REFUGEE, AND STATELESS WOMEN

The legal and human rights and dignity of migrant, refugee, and stateless women and children around the world are routinely violated. WRC works to hold governments accountable to their obligation to respect their rights, so they can find safety and rebuild their lives successfully.



Michelle Brané, Director, Migrant Rights and Justice Program, appeared on MSNBC to talk about the Trump administration's policy of family separation, June 18, 2018.

Fighting for Migrant Rights and Justice

In January 2017, the Trump administration began threatening the use of family separation as a deterrent to migrant families seeking protection at the US border. By January 2018, WRC was [documenting](#) hundreds of family separations. In April 2018, the Trump administration doubled down and announced its "zero-tolerance" policy toward anyone trying to come to the United States without authorization—resulting in thousands of additional family separations. WRC witnessed families being torn apart at the border, and sounded the alarm. On June 20,

President Trump issued an executive order ending this policy, after we and our partners exposed the cruelty of the policy—and the American people demanded it end. A week later, a federal court ordered that all children must be reunited with their parents within 30 days and children under the age of five within 14 days, and that all parents must be able to speak with their children within 10 days. WRC was [appointed to a steering committee](#) in the case and helped coordinate the reunification of thousands of families.

Campaigning for Equal Nationality Rights

In roughly a quarter of countries around the world, women continue to face enormous legal discrimination in nationality rights, unable to pass their nationality to their children or to acquire, change, and retain their nationality on an equal basis with men. This discrimination results in wide-ranging human rights violations and can contribute to gender-based violence.

In October 2017, a regional meeting of government and civil society leaders resulted in a groundbreaking and ambitious outcome statement calling on Arab League Member States to uphold equal nationality rights for all citizens, regardless of gender. The meeting, held in Cairo, was cosponsored by the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, which is coordinated by WRC. In March 2018, at a high-level event during the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Morocco announced it would enact important nationality law reforms.



The First Arab Conference on Good Practices & Regional Opportunities to Strengthen Women's Nationality Rights League of Arab States Secretariat General, 1-2 October 2017 Final Declaration

The first Arab Conference on Good Practices and Regional Opportunities to Strengthen Women's Nationality Rights was held in the presence of 18 Arab countries, in collaboration with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights on 1 and 2 October 2017 at the Headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and in the presence of representatives of Member States, parliamentarians and representatives of civil society; and with the participation of the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, the Arab Parliament, the Arab Labor Organization, Arab Women Organization, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, United Nations High



Watch "Family is Family,
No Matter Where You're From:
End Family Separation"

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=2ra48RK49xU&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ra48RK49xU&feature=youtu.be)

WORKING TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the greatest threats to women in emergency contexts. WRC is working to fundamentally transform the way GBV is addressed in humanitarian settings.

Using Cash to Protect Women from Gender-based Violence

Cash assistance—the practice of distributing money rather than traditional relief items like food—is becoming an increasingly important tool in emergency response. While cash itself is not risky, there may be potential risks of GBV associated with the introduction of cash. Cash also has the potential to enhance the protection of refugee women and GBV survivors. Our [new toolkit](#) helps humanitarian workers assess and mitigate these risks, as well as maximize the benefits of cash assistance. It enhances the protection of displaced populations, promotes recovery, and builds resilience.

The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies

The Call to Action is a groundbreaking initiative involving states and donors, international organizations, and NGOs. The goal of the Call to Action is to fundamentally transform the way GBV is addressed in emergencies so that every humanitarian response—from the outset—mitigates the risks of GBV, especially violence against women and girls, and provides safe and comprehensive services for survivors. WRC helped develop the [Call to Action Road Map](#), which lays out the priority actions required to ensure that GBV is well addressed from the very beginning of every humanitarian response. In 2018, WRC had the honor of working with partners in northeast Nigeria to develop and implement a local version of the Road Map, and began work to support a second pilot in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Watch “Join Us in
the Call to Action on
Protection from Gender-
Based Violence in
Emergencies”

https://youtu.be/8JZ_83XZsXM



*Interview with an internally
displaced woman in Iraq
about livelihoods and risks
of gender-based violence.*

© Tenzin Manell/WRC

ADVOCATING FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH FOR ALL REFUGEES

In crisis situations, lack of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care is a leading cause of death, disease, and disability among displaced women and girls of reproductive age. WRC works to ensure that SRH services are available to all refugees.



Ioannis Baskozos, Secretary General of Public Health, Greece, addresses the 2017 IAWG conference. © IAWG

Involving Communities in Sexual and Reproductive Health

In November 2017, WRC embarked on an innovative community health program in Borno State in northeast Nigeria, designed to build capacity and resilience at the community and local government level. The program will improve reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health and nutrition services in areas affected by conflict by directly supporting the state government to implement community-based and primary health care programming. In keeping with our commitment to working with local partners and ensuring sustainability, we are supporting a women-led local organization to manage daily operations and increase capacity within the state government.

Advancing the Global SRH Agenda

WRC hosts the secretariat of the [Inter-agency Working Group](#) on Reproductive Health in Crises (IAWG), a global coalition that collaborates to advance SRH in humanitarian settings. In November 2017, IAWG's 17th Annual Meeting convened more than 200 participants from 44 countries, its biggest and most diverse meeting to date. Representatives from donor governments, implementing agencies, the United Nations, development agencies, and community and local organizations explored ways to improve quality, access to, and use of SRH services in humanitarian settings from initial response through sustainable recovery.



A WRC research officer consults with research assistants after a successful focus group discussion pilot in Konduga, Borno State. The data from the focus group discussions will be used to inform community health programming in areas affected by conflict.

© Hilary Wartinger/WRC

DEVELOPING TOOLS FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE

Giving refugee women opportunities to safely earn a living puts them more directly in charge of their finances. This helps to increase their self-reliance and reduces their risk of gender-based violence. WRC is a pioneer of work in this area.

An Initiative to Help Refugees Achieve Self-Reliance

Most refugee households desperately want the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families—to work, to use their skills, and make decisions about their finances, their lives, and their futures. WRC, in partnership with RefugePoint, launched the [Self-Reliance Initiative](#) in New York during the UN General Assembly in September 2018. This cutting-edge initiative focuses on promoting opportunities for refugees to become self-reliant and measuring the impacts of those opportunities to ensure they lead to a better quality of life. Our goal is to roll out the initiative globally, with the aim of reaching 5 million refugees in five years with self-reliance programming.

Gender and Economic Opportunities

Assets in emergency contexts are a double-edged sword: they can help people overcome crises but can also quickly turn into liabilities, increasing vulnerability to GBV and insecurity. In June 2018, WRC formed a partnership with UNHCR to develop training modules for the refugee agency's Global Learning Center to enhance the capacity of UNHCR and partner staff globally on gender and protection issues within livelihoods programming and cash and voucher assistance. The project will institutionalize our cash and GBV toolkit (see GBV section, page 6) as well as our [Cohort Livelihoods and Risk Analysis](#) (CLARA) guidance and tools.

Watch “Mainstreaming
GBV Considerations in
Cash-Based Initiatives”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=S9RYLGMjCUI





Woman trader, Iraq

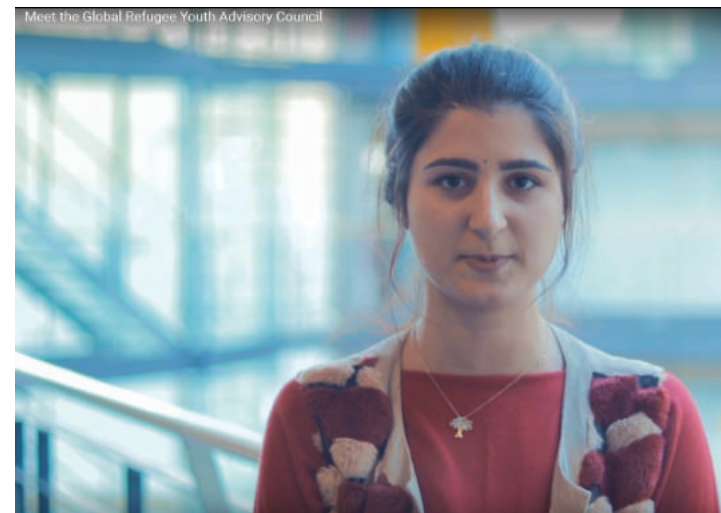
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SOCIAL INCLUSION: LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Within refugee populations, certain groups are particularly vulnerable or likely to be overlooked. These include refugees with disabilities, adolescent girls, and youth. WRC is working to ensure that refugees in these groups are heard and have an active role in making decisions about their lives.

Watch “Meet the Global
Refugee Youth Advisory
Council”

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=3TWsBywQWPc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TWsBywQWPc)



A Commitment to Refugees with Disabilities

As many as 13 million persons with disabilities have been forcibly displaced. They are often excluded from services, including GBV prevention and response, education, livelihoods, and sexual and reproductive health. WRC has been instrumental in promoting and drafting global guidance on disability inclusion in humanitarian action. The guidance is expected to be endorsed by the UN in 2019 and will then be rolled out to inform and change programs on the ground. WRC was also invited to speak at the first-ever Global Disability Summit in July 2018 in London, which was attended by government ministers, heads of donor agencies and civil society organizations, and corporate CEOs. The Summit yielded 170 high-level commitments, including those submitted by WRC, to strengthen disability inclusion and address stigma and discrimination in lower-income countries.

I'm Here: Responding to the Needs of Adolescent Girls

When humanitarian crises strike, adolescent girls are especially disadvantaged. To better respond to their unique needs and capacities, WRC developed the [I'm Here Approach](#), a guide for humanitarians to gain a deeper understanding of how adolescent girls experience crises and inform tailored and girl-focused humanitarian programming. Numerous partners, including UNICEF Lebanon, have adopted the *I'm Here* Approach and are using it to inform and shape their adolescent girls programming.

“We Are the Future”: Refugee Youth Speak Out at the UN

Refugee youth are often neglected in humanitarian response, their skills, abilities, and needs rarely fully recognized. WRC was instrumental in establishing the Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC), which advises the UN refugee agency. The youth were actively engaged in contributing to the Global Compact on Refugees (adopted by the UN in December 2018)—consulting their communities, bringing their voices to high-level meetings in Geneva, speaking on plenaries, and ensuring that the Compact addresses the needs and concerns of refugee youth.



Participants in an adolescent girls' program in north Lebanon.

© Boram Lee/WRC



Displaced adolescent girls face many challenges.

© Omar Robles/ WRC

CELEBRATING THE RESILIENCE OF REFUGEE WOMEN

At the Voices of Courage Awards luncheon in May 2018, we celebrated the resilience of refugee women, honoring refugees from Syria, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.



“What does resilience mean to me? For me it means strength, determination, and the ability to recover from difficult situations.”

- Voices of Courage honoree Sake Jemelia Beda, May 2018.

Massachusetts State Representative Juana Matias presented the Voices of Courage Award to Sake Jemelia Beda of South Sudan. As a child, Ms. Beda fled her home in South Sudan for Uganda, where she remained for 13 years. She qualified as a nurse and midwife, and eventually returned to South Sudan to practice midwifery. She now travels across the continent to train other midwives, and serves as a reproductive health trainer in crisis areas.



“What refugee women want and need more than anything else is respect, a chance to start again, to work, to be seen as human again.”

- Voices of Courage honoree Majida Alaskary, May 2018.

Majida Alaskary fled the occupied Palestinian Territories when she was a youth, eventually settling in Damascus, Syria. She became a journalist, and in 2016, afraid for her life because of her reporting, she was forced to flee her adopted home. She made her way to a refugee camp on Samos Island in Greece. Despite being granted asylum and free to leave at any time, she chose to remain and help other refugees who cannot leave.



“We want others to know that we are assets to the countries that are hosting us. We just need the opportunities to thrive.”

- Voices of Courage honoree Mugisha Willent, May 2018.

Mugisha Willent is a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who fled with her family to western Uganda more than 16 years ago. Ms. Willent founded a program in her refugee settlement to help out-of-school girls, young mothers, and survivors of gender-based violence. She is a member of the Global Youth Advisory Council and has spoken at the UN in Geneva to advocate for free movement in host countries, access to international travel documents, and parity in school fees between refugees and national students.



Ambassador Melanne Verwee, US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, (left) and Ambassador Anne Anderson, Ireland's ambassador to the United States from 2013 to 2017, (right) presented Voices of Courage Awards to, respectively, Mugisha Willent and Majida Alaskary.



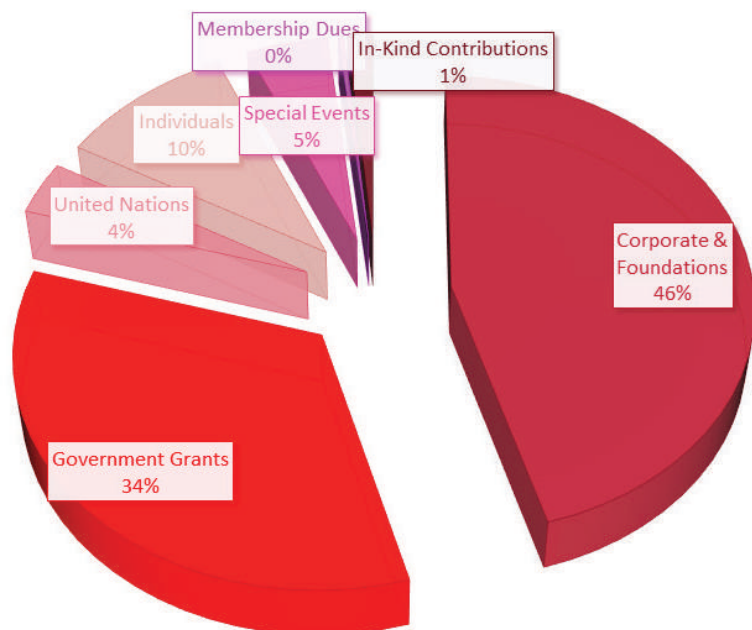
Emmylou Harris performed at the Voices of Courage Awards luncheon. During the event, she announced the Lantern Tour, a series of concerts for migrant and refugee families that benefited WRC.

A recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 60th Annual Grammy Awards in 2018, she has long been recognized for her commitment to social justice causes.

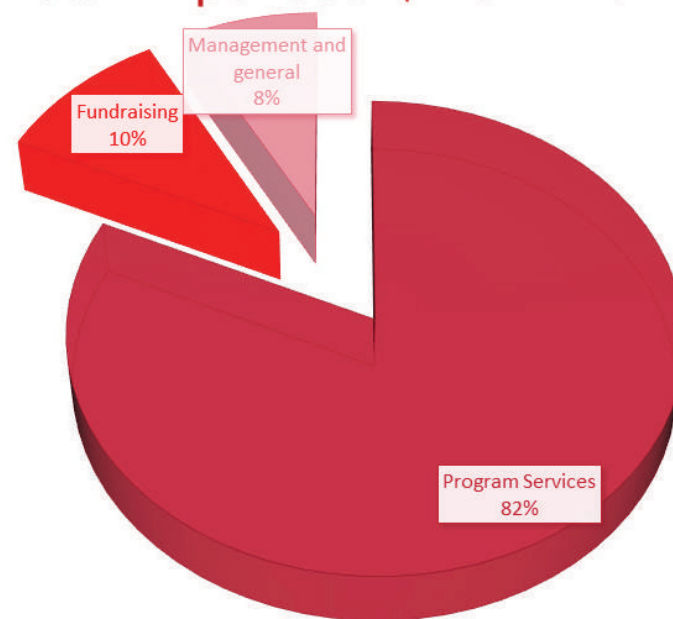
FINANCIAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

The Women's Refugee Commission is exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Copies of our [audited financial statements](#) for FY 2018 are available on our website.

FY 2018 Revenue Total Revenue: \$14.2 million



FY 2018 Expenses Total Expenses: \$7.6 million



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(As of September 2018)



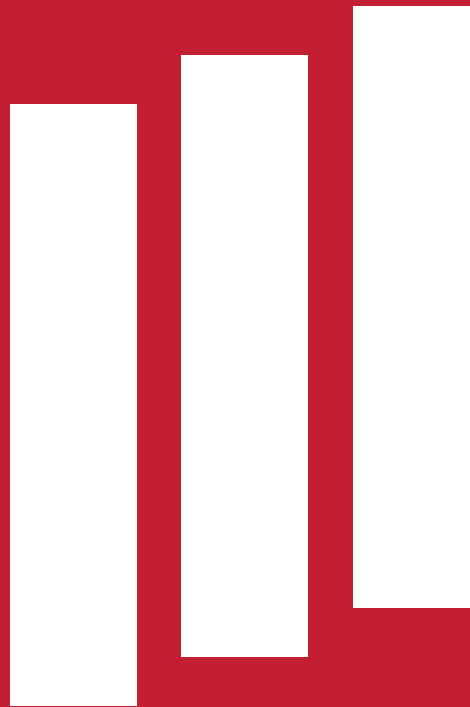


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HELP US CREATE LASTING CHANGE

The Women's Refugee Commission is the only international organization dedicated solely to protecting refugee women's rights to sexual and reproductive health care, to freedom from gender-based violence, and to economic and social empowerment.

Please make your gift today at:
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or contact us at info@wrcommission.org to join our mailing list and stay up to date on ways you can be involved.



**WOMEN'S
REFUGEE
COMMISSION**

Research. Rethink. Resolve.

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