



Profile of Courage: Mangala Sharma

Life has not been easy for Mangala Sharma, a human rights activist and former refugee from Bhutan. Difficult enough were the eight years she spent in a refugee camp in Nepal. But even more devastating were the nearly three years she spent separated from her husband and two young daughters.

Sharma, a member of the ethnic Nepalese minority from southern Bhutan, fled persecution in Bhutan in the early 1990s and was able to gain asylum in the United States in March 2001. Her husband and two daughters, however, remained behind in Nepal, hoping for timely reunification in the United States once Sharma gained asylum. That did not happen. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. family reunification program ground to a halt and remained nearly stalled for more than a year.

It took several years of advocacy by the Women's Commission and others, including letter writing and raising awareness in the media about the slowdown in family reunification, before Sharma's husband and two daughters finally received word in March 2003 that they were cleared to join her in the United States.



Mangala Sharma's daughters, Richa, 12, and Vandana, 14, with her cousin, Tulsi Ghimirey. Mangala was separated from her daughters and husband for four years.

"The separation was extremely painful," says Sharma, who works at the Refugee Women's Network in Decatur, Georgia, where she helps refugee women integrate into the United States and become leaders in their *(continued on page 7)*

Giving Women and Children a Chance at a New Life

Bi-partisan bill to protect at-risk women and children introduced in Senate

Displaced women and children who face abuse and harm due to their gender or age are one step closer to gaining special protection. As armed conflict and human rights abuses escalate around the world, women and children are typically most at risk of displacement and violation of their rights.

The Widows and Orphans Act of 2003 (S.1353), introduced by Senators Sam Brownback (R-KS), Mike DeWine (R-OH) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA), would ensure that especially vulnerable women and children be identified and processed quickly for resettlement in the United States.

"This legislation would for the first time address gaps in protection that jeopardize the safety of women and children who face serious harm as a result of persecution in either their home or host country," says Wendy Young, the Women's Commission's director of government relations and U.S. programs. "S.1353 will go

a long way to protect women and children who are separated from or have lost their families and communities – the ones most vulnerable to violence, exploitation, torture or loss of life."

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Making a Difference in Sierra Leone: Halima Tejan-Sie, Protection Partner

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

An independent organization formed with the assistance of the International Rescue Committee to advocate for the solution of problems affecting refugee women and children.

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Halima Tejan-Sie became a Women's Commission Protection Partner in April 2003, taking over from Binta Mansaray, who had run the Women's Commission's Sierra Leone office since October 2001. Ramina Johal, Senior Coordinator for Participation and Protection, visited the Sierra Leone office in May 2003 with board member Mary Anne Schwalbe. Halima discusses her work:



Halima Tejan-Sie (right) and other Women's Commission staff in the Sierra Leone office.

© Ramina Johal

"I am enjoying the work and learning every day. I like that the Women's Commission is a close-knit team that is at the same time very effective. I think we operate differently from other organizations.

"One of the unfortunate aspects of doing advocacy is that the process between documenting a problem and the arrival of a solution is quite lengthy. For example, we go to a camp or community and document the appalling conditions, and although we stress that our organization doesn't deliver services, but rather talks on the refugees' behalf, you get an unmistakable sense of their expectations, and the fact that they want to see results soon. We do try and make people aware that the process is affected by a lot of factors, which determines the time frame. But just to see women and children enduring those conditions without knowing when exactly conditions will improve can be quite heartbreaking.

"Of course, the positive aspects are seeing the results, making a little bit of difference in someone's life. In this post-conflict setting, people won't get what is due to them for some time to come, but just to see a little bit of improvement in their life is satisfying.

"Our access to war-affected women and their concerns, as well as to NGOs and UN agencies, ensures that we have the avenues to make the concerns of the women heard, especially when we deal with marginalized communities who, without our assistance, would have no way of making their voices heard.

"I think it's always good for those who aren't based in the field to get the opportunity to assess conditions themselves, rather than to always rely on reported information. Take the issue of shelter: I don't think the team from New York could have understood how deplorable living conditions were for most returnee women without having seen it for themselves. Mary Anne and Ramina were also appalled by the high incidence of malnutrition evidenced by the distended bellies of so many children. The experiences of the New York team during the visit will support and enhance advocacy at the headquarters level.

"The most useful thing I've learned is that advocacy needn't be confrontational. Sometimes when you approach agencies with findings that are negative, they can be defensive. I think the skill lies in showing them that we're not being accusative, but relaying the experiences of the target groups who are recipients of the programs and showing the agencies that there are certain ways things could be improved." ❖

The Women's Commission thanks The Oak Foundation for its support of our work in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone - A Partner in Participation and Protection

Mary Anne Schwalbe discusses her trip to Sierra Leone

I first went to Sierra Leone in 1997 with Beverlee Bruce, former Women's Commission Chair and IRC Board member. We visited Grafton Camp in Freetown, which housed refugees and internally displaced persons. At that time, numerous international organizations were there to work on their behalf. The women in Grafton had hope for a peaceful and more prosperous future.

Now that there has been relative peace since the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement, a number of the assistance agencies and NGOs are gone. But many of the problems remain.

When I traveled to Sierra Leone again at the end of April/early May 2003, it was clear from visits to Freetown and the field that the head of the Women's Commission office, Halima Tejan-Sie, and her associate, Marie Bayraytay — who had been a refugee — were respected and trusted by the women whom they were trying to serve. (See related article, page 2.) The women met with us and discussed their experiences.

I have been to 19 countries since starting refugee work in 1989 and have never met with women who were so open and honest — all due to their relationship with our local staff. The women I met at Grafton were ashamed and upset to be living in conditions that were harmful to their children: several families in one room, no privacy, children hearing and seeing things that upset them; sexual exploitation of women and children for money for food or education; and being forced to send children to live with relatives who had access to housing or education, knowing that the children might be exploited, but having no other options.

The government recently deemed the people living in Grafton Camp “homeless” and not internally displaced because they had rented and did not own the homes that

“Thank you, Women’s Commission”

Fatmata was abducted at age 16 from the Peacock Farm displaced persons community by rebel forces. She is the eldest of five siblings. Fatmata had never received any education and had never been to school. With support from the Women’s Commission, Fatmata was able to attend a skills training program where she got her first chance to start learning how to read and write. Fatmata also learned Gara tie-dyeing, needlework and tailoring. She will start the second year of her course in September and wants to specialize in tailoring.

“I am very thankful to God for the opportunities the Women’s Commission has given me. My parents are thankful too. When I returned from captivity I was very depressed and unhappy. I also came home to find my parents living in poverty; they couldn’t afford to help me at all. If it hadn’t been for this program I would have been unable to continue living with my parents and would have been compelled to join the kind of lifestyle that many other girls are in now to earn a living [prostitution].

“I have learnt many skills and through these skills I can earn some money. I use the money I make to help my family and to help myself. When I come home and give some money to my mother she is so surprised and happy and cannot believe that I am earning and contributing to my family’s upkeep. They are very proud of me. I am proud of myself, too.

“Although I have had bad experiences, I no longer reflect on them in a negative way because now there is some hope in my life. I can earn money and help my family, so some good has come out of what happened to me.” ❖

were destroyed by war; the government claims, therefore, that they were not displaced and takes no responsibility for them.

Women, mostly widows, make up the majority of the population in Grafton. We heard story after story about husbands killed during the war. There is no proper shelter, no services and no future. There are traditional birth attendants but no supplies. Many of these women have turned to prostitution. One woman said, “The local man says, ‘You want food, you want soap, you live with me and you have them.’ But then he drop you.” The women and children live in tents and on boxes. They are not allowed to plant or to sell anything.

The strength of the Women’s Commission protection partners program is being able to access information that non-local staff wouldn’t necessarily be able to.

Because Halima and her staff are from Sierra Leone, they understand the particular needs of women there; the refugee and IDP women relate to Women’s Commission staff and respect their advice on skills building in all areas.

The scope of the work and everything done in the field is led by the local team, ensuring that issues of importance to communities are addressed.

There’s no question that the women of Grafton are still struggling, but the Women’s Commission is still there, doing all it can to ensure that their voices, and those of refugee women throughout the country, are heard. ❖

Mary Anne Schwalbe is Founding Director Emerita of the Women’s Commission.

W From Fear to Freedom: Honoring Those Working to Change Asylum and Detention in the U.S.

Gaining access to the U.S. asylum system is more difficult now than perhaps ever before, and the treatment of those asylum seekers who do make it to the United States to present their claims continues to deteriorate. The Women's Commission honored two asylees and two organizations that are working to protect the rights of asylum seekers in the United States at its May 15 Voices of Courage Awards luncheon. Emmy- and Tony-award winning actress Stockard Channing hosted the event.

The awardees were Edwin Muñoz, a 16-year-old Honduran who was held in detention for more than six months and now speaks out on behalf of unaccompanied refugee children in U.S. detention; Aster Kidane, a refugee advocate and asylee who fled war in Ethiopia and runs a program that arranges for volunteers to visit women asylum seekers who are being held in detention in the New York area; 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 United States has a rich history of opening its doors to those trying to escape tyranny in search of freedom and justice," says Wendy Young, Women's Commission director of government relations. "But increasingly, our asylum system is becoming punitive, abusing those who have come to us for help."

Women and children seeking safe haven in the United States are often subject to prolonged and arbitrary detention in inhumane and degrading conditions. Cut off from the outside world, they struggle to present their asylum claims, which are often based

on rights violations, including rape, sexual exploitation, trafficking, female genital mutilation and forced early marriages.

Every year, 5,000 unaccompanied refugee children are held in detention in the United States, often in juvenile jails. Women asylum seekers are at risk of abuse and neglect in



L-R: Mary Diaz, executive director, with Jim Kearney of Latham and Watkins, Aster Kidane, Susana Barciela, Stockard Channing and Edwin Muñoz.

detention. The Women's Commission in 2000 documented widespread sexual, physical, emotional and verbal abuse of women in detention by immigration officers.

Thanks in part to the work of the Women's Commission, the situation for refugee children who arrive alone in the United States is changing (see related article on page 8).

New challenges have arisen since

September 11, 2001. Refugee and asylum policy has become enmeshed in the debate on national security and the fight against terrorism; tensions between legitimate concerns about public safety and the adherence to our national tradition of welcoming newcomers to our shores have resulted in even more restrictions for asylum seekers.

"Historically the United States has been a leader in refugee protection, a tradition which defines us as a nation and makes us unique," says Young. "Our security concerns, however valid, should not come at the expense of refugees and legitimate asylum seekers who are looking to the United States for protection from persecution. It is vital that we not turn our back on those who — like our predecessors more than two hundred years ago — came to this country in search of freedom and justice. Too often, however, we seem to be doing just that."

The luncheon raised \$318,650.

Among the major sponsors were: Gail Furman, JP MorganChase & Co., Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, Evercore Partners and Latham & Watkins. ❖

Awardee Highlight: Edwin Muñoz

Edwin Muñoz was four years old when his father died; his mother later abandoned him. At 13, after living for years with a cousin who beat him and forced him to beg, he decided to leave San Pedro Sula, Honduras, and make his way to the United States, where he heard children were treated well. His arduous journey took months. When he arrived at the U.S. border, instead of finding a safe haven, he was detained by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now DHS) for more than six months in a juvenile jail, enduring beatings from prison guards and fellow inmates. Only through a sympathetic judge was he able to obtain the services of a pro bono attorney who helped him win his asylum case.

Now just 16 years old, Edwin has become an articulate spokesperson for unaccompanied refugee children detained nationwide by the DHS.

For profiles of the other honorees, visit our website:

www.womenscommission.org/newsroom/press_releases/0513.html

Watchlist Details Atrocities Against Congolese Children; UN Acts

A June report on the effect of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on children released by the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict received tremendous press coverage and helped raise awareness of the atrocities being committed there. The UN Security Council later expanded the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC, allowing it to respond more effectively to the dire situation described in the report.

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo highlighted the systematic torture and cruelty against children during Congo's five-year war. According to the report, both foreign and domestic governments and armed groups have committed gross violations against children, including assault,

rape, abduction, sexual torture, forced displacement, underage recruitment into armed forces and forced participation in the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The report calls on parties to the conflict to immediately halt violations against children and adolescents. The international community, particularly the UN Security Council, is also urged to work vigorously to end abuses and to hold accountable perpetrators of crimes against children.

The Watchlist shared advance copies of the report with members of the UN Security Council for their June mission to the Great Lakes Region of Africa, and publicly released the report at a press conference at UN headquarters marking the Security Council's return from Africa and the Day of the African Child. The report was covered by

more than 50 media outlets world wide, including CNN, BBC, *The New York Times*, AP, Reuters, CBC-TV and NPR.

UN resolution 1493, which was passed in July, authorizes an increase in the UN peacekeeping force's military strength, as well as its mandate to protect civilians, including children. In Ituri and Kivu, two areas highlighted by the Watchlist as needing urgent attention, the mission may now take the necessary measures to protect civilians and humanitarian workers.

The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, housed at the Women's Commission, is an initiative of nongovernmental organizations to improve monitoring, reporting and follow-up action on the impact of conflict on children in situations of armed conflict. ❖

CREATIVE DONORS

A Show of Support

When New York City-based writer Siobhan Fitzpatrick learned about the work of the Women's Commission, she decided to contribute her creative skills to supporting its work. After hearing about an income-generation project in a town on Sierra Leone's war-ravaged border with Liberia, Fitzpatrick began researching the country's 10-year conflict and its consequences on refugees.

Waking Kya was born: part play, part dance piece, the work is about a Sierra Leonean refugee woman and her sister. The main character tells the story of her family, how they came to live in a refugee camp, the gang rape of her sister, Kya, and how they deal with the aftermath. The performance piece touches upon the complex psychosocial effects of women surviving war, as well as the longstanding

problems facing refugees and the internally displaced in Sierra Leone and war-torn countries worldwide.

The performance, which gained attention in the local press as well as CNN International, raised thousands of dollars for INTERWOSTRACK, an income-generation project in Kailahun, Sierra Leone.

Crafty Assistance

At Third World Handcrafts Shoppe, everyone wins. The Milwaukee-based store's goals are threefold: to provide artists and craftspeople in developing countries an outlet for their crafts; to give people in the Milwaukee area access to unique items; and to support organizations working to better conditions in the countries where these goods are made. Founded in 1988 as part of an annual holiday craft fair, Third

World Handcrafts buys goods directly from artists or groups around the world, thereby offering its suppliers a sustainable and steady income. Now a full-fledged retail shop, it carries a wide array of merchandise from 44 developing countries.

One of the store's most popular items was cards and bookmarks made by women in Afghanistan. Third World Handcrafts chose the Women's Commission's Afghan Women's Fund as a recipient for its proceeds.

"We know we are so blessed and take all our freedoms for granted," said store treasurer Barb Augenstein.

(Special thanks to Women's Commission Chair Emerita Dr. Judy Mayotte for introducing the Third World Handcrafts Shoppe to the Women's Commission.)

Study Reveals Widespread Gender-based Violence in East Timor

Giving Voice to Peace

Survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in East Timor are being heard for the first time. Several hundred East Timorese women discussed their experiences with local interviewers as part of a recent study on the prevalence of GBV among East Timorese women of reproductive age (18-49). The groundbreaking study is the first step toward addressing this violence in the newly independent Asian nation.

The few studies that have been done previously on GBV in East Timor have focused on sexual violence; there is almost nothing on rates of domestic violence and the mental health consequences of GBV.

“Most of these women had never been asked about GBV before,” says Jeanne Ward, GBV research officer, Reproductive Health Response in Conflict (RHRC) Consortium, who led the research.

The study in East Timor was part of a three-year global GBV initiative spearheaded by the consortium and jointly administered by the Women’s Commission and the International Rescue Committee.

Two districts were selected and nearly 300 women interviewed. Interviewers from local NGOs and women’s groups were trained to administer the one-hour face-to-face questionnaire.

According to the study, an average of one in four women reported exposure to psychological and physical violence perpetrated by someone outside their family during the crisis in East Timor. The overwhelming majority of women who experienced violence reported being threatened with a weapon and subjected to improper sexual comments. In more than two-thirds of the incidents during the crisis, women were threatened with death. Levels of reported violence were significantly lower post-crisis; more

than three-quarters of GBV survivors reported being threatened with a weapon and 94 percent reported being subjected to unwanted sexual comments. Fifty-nine percent of all reported incidents of post-crisis violence involved a threat to the woman’s life.

During the crisis the vast majority of perpetrators were militia, Indonesian military or Indonesian police, while post-crisis the majority were neighbors and community members. Displacement to a refugee camp in West Timor was found to be associated with significantly higher reported rates of sexual violence post-crisis.

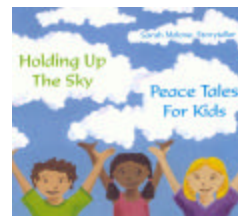
Few women reported incidents of violence to police or local authorities because they didn’t think anything could be done. In 40 percent of the reported incidents during the crisis and 48 percent post-crisis, no action was taken.

Domestic violence survivors have been even less likely to report. The issue may be one of access to or availability of institutional support and also may be associated with fear of blame or reprisal by those from whom a survivor might seek help.

In addition to gathering data on GBV prevalence in East Timor, other goals of the research were to field-test a survey tool designed for a post-conflict setting, identify barriers and preferences for GBV prevention and treatment services, improve field-based programs’ ability to conduct and disseminate GBV research, and provide data necessary for advocacy to health care providers and donor agencies regarding the need for comprehensive GBV programming targeting conflict-affected settings.

“This study will make an important contribution to the development of policies and programs regarding GBV in East Timor,” Ward says. ❖

Sarah Malone, a bilingual storyteller and school social worker from New Mexico, has been noticing a



disturbing trend among the children she works with. She says the children are more aggressive and violent, particularly since September 11, 2001. She herself “felt inundated by the negative language of terror, fear and war on television, and in newspapers and magazines” in the time since the attacks. She decided to act.

She started a nonprofit organization called Peace Tales and produced “Holding Up the Sky – Peace Tales for Kids” – a CD of stories, music and poems from around the world that stress the importance of peacemaking in daily life and nonviolent solutions to everyday conflicts. The stories also reinforce the values of honesty, forgiveness and friendship.

The CD was born out of Malone’s desire to give voice to peace and to define in practical ways what peacemaking really means. By telling stories to teach the lessons of peace, Malone found children learned how to apply non-violent solutions in their daily lives.

Malone also wanted the CD’s proceeds to benefit children from around the world affected by conflict. She chose the Women’s Commission and Peace Talks Radio, a New Mexico-based station, as beneficiaries of the proceeds.

Malone says that by supporting the Women’s Commission, she is delighted that the CD will help “children far from our shores who know firsthand the devastation of armed conflict and the desperate need for peace in our world.”

The CD, which costs \$15, can be bought from the Peace Tales website, www.peacetales.org. A second CD for adult listeners is planned. ❖

Giving Women and Children a Chance

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Women and Children at Risk

Widows, for example, are at risk of abuses such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, trafficking, early marriage and gender-based violence. Orphans are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, servitude, child prostitution and recruitment as child soldiers. These abuses may be inflicted by military or guerrilla forces, peacekeeping troops, members of the host or refugee community, or even aid workers.

Despite these abuses, protection for women and children is often inadequate or even non-existent. Voluntary return or integration into the local community are in many cases not viable options for widows, orphans or other women and children. Many have lost their traditional protectors, i.e., family members, while others may be ostracized as a result of the abuses they have experienced.

Experts estimate that although 80 percent of the world's

uprooted people are women and children, only 500 women at risk of harm and 300 unaccompanied refugee children were processed in the United States for refugee resettlement in FY 2002; a total of 27,100 refugees were admitted. Indeed, despite the abuses they face, women and children have severely limited access to refugee resettlement, leaving them vulnerable to further human rights violations in refugee camps and other settings. When they apply for asylum, they face various challenges: the way gender- and age-related persecution is addressed remains ambiguous; interviews are not gender- or age-sensitive; and cultural barriers make it difficult to discuss such abuses. The internationally accepted definition of a refugee does not explicitly recognize gender and age as grounds for refugee protection, making the presentation of claims based on such issues particularly difficult.

Falling Through the Cracks

“Too many of these women and children fall through the cracks of the refugee resettlement system,

which does not formally allow for the resettlement of women and children at risk,” Young says. “To qualify, they must have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country, which means women who face abuse in their host country are not included. Resettlement is also not available to women who are at risk of human rights abuses while still in their own country.”

S.1353 would address the gap between the refugees who are resettled under current programs and the vulnerable women and children in the refugee community who are not benefiting from the existing resettlement programs.

The bill would create a new, narrow category of special immigrants under the Immigration and Nationality Act. Once identified, they would be processed for special immigrant status within 45 days and then paroled to the United States and allowed to apply for legal permanent residence within a year.

“The bill would allow these women and children to enjoy their basic rights and begin their lives anew, in safety and dignity,” Young says. ❖

Mangala Sharma

(continued from page 1)

communities. “It was devastating for all of us; our lives were on hold. I hadn’t seen my daughters since February 2000. It’s an important time for them – they’re growing fast. It also affected my work. When a caseworker like myself has a tormented story, too, it’s hard to help others. It’s been a very difficult journey.”

Sharma was one of more than 90,000 ethnic Nepalese who fled Bhutan in the early 1990s after the government introduced a policy of forced assimilation to the majority ethnic group’s tradition and culture.

In the refugee camp in eastern Nepal, Sharma founded an organization called Bhutanese Refugees Aiding Victims of Violence (BRAVVE) in response to rape and other gender violence she witnessed. Run entirely by refugees, the organization provides skills training to refugee women and adolescents in tailoring, weaving and typing, among other activities. The money they earn is used to buy food to supplement the limited provisions they receive.

Since being reunited with her family, Sharma’s life has changed completely. “Now that my daughters and husband are here, I feel that I can truly live my life again. I’ll be

more effective in my work helping others who have been through the same difficult experiences and I hope make a difference in their lives.”

She’s circumspect about her experience. “I certainly understand the need for increased security measures after September 11, but there are thousands of refugees like myself, my young daughters and my husband who look to the United States as a safe haven and rely on the lifesaving protection it provides,” Sharma says. “But, we felt like we had been forgotten by the government and might have remained so if not for the work of organizations like the Women’s Commission.” ❖

W A Landmark in the Protection of Refugee Children

Some 5,000 refugee children arrive alone in the United States each year seeking safe haven. They often face asylum proceedings alone – without the help of an appointed guardian or legal counsel. But this would change with the passage of a new bill that has been introduced in the U.S. Senate.

The Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2003 (S.1129) would greatly expand services for these children. “This bipartisan legislation, under the leadership of Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and seven other Senators, would for the first time ensure that children receive the assistance they need to obtain refugee protection or other relief from deportation,” says Wendy Young, the Women’s Commission’s director of government relations. The Women’s Commission has played a key role in garnering support for the legislation, as it did with a bill last year that transferred the custody and care of unaccompanied children from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) (now the Department of Homeland Security) to the Office of Refugee Resettlement, an agency with decades of experience working with

vulnerable refugee children.

S.1129 would require that children under the age of 18 be represented by counsel in their immigration proceedings. Currently, less than half of unaccompanied children are assisted by attorneys despite the life-or-death decisions that are frequently made in their cases. The bill emphasizes the use of pro bono counsel at no expense to the government. “In recent years, we have witnessed a tremendous outpouring of support from the legal community with lawyers stepping forward to offer free legal services to unaccompanied refugee children,” Young says. “The bill will build on this remarkable resource and ensure that such representation is consistently available.”

S.1129 will establish an innovative pilot program to test the appointment of guardians *ad litem* for children in immigration proceedings. Guardians with expertise in child welfare would facilitate the child’s participation in the court proceedings. “It’s shocking to see children as young as 18 months old appear before an immigration judge with no one to help them,” Young says. “Counsel and guardians

would not only make the proceedings more humane and child-friendly, they would also make them more efficient, as judges could better ascertain the child’s eligibility for relief.”

Many of the children who arrive alone in the United States each year have been forced to flee their homelands to escape armed conflict and human rights violations such as sexual slavery, child marriages, forced prostitution, conscription as child soldiers, trafficking and child abuse. Traumatized by both their displacement and past abuse, these children struggle to obtain asylum protection in an immigration system that is poorly designed to address their needs.

“By enacting S.1129, Congress will close the protection gaps that have in the past sacrificed the protection of these very vulnerable youngsters,” Young says. “It would establish a system to provide appropriate care and assistance to children to ensure that those who should be returned to their homelands can do so quickly and safely and those who cannot return are given a chance at a new life in the United States.” ❖

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