

women's asylum news

refugee women's resource project @ asylumaid

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also in this issue

International news from Pakistan, India, Cameroon, etc.

p. 2

International actions & events

p. 4

UK news

p. 5

UK events & projects

p. 7

Forthcoming publication UK

p. 8

Forthcoming publication UK

p. 9

Online resources international & UK

p. 10

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Please send any information that you would like to see published in our next edition by Wednesday 4 October 2006 (see email above or postal address on back cover).

USA: Court of Appeal says rape part of 'legitimate investigation' in gender case

In a rare intervention by the US Justice Department, federal immigration officials were told to reopen an asylum case in which a woman accused of a political assassination in her country of origin, and who had subsequently been repeatedly raped, was denied refugee status.¹

Monique M, a woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo, fled her country after being repeatedly raped in detention for six weeks by Congolese officials who were allegedly investigating the political murder of President Laurent Kabila in 2001. She was accused of being involved in the President's assassination. At the time of the incident, she was working as a secretary in the chief government building in the capital Kinshasa. The mother of three, who was also one month pregnant at the time of her arrest, was taken into custody and told that her friends said she had helped the assassins enter the palace. Despite claiming her innocence, she was held in a small cell with five other women. They were repeatedly beaten and raped by the guards on a daily basis. She suffered a miscarriage after one of the rapes. One of the Congolese judges conducting the investigation into the murder of President Kabila helped her to escape because he knew her family. He told her never to return to Congo and that he would get falsified documents to suggest she had been killed in prison. In September 2001

¹ Story circulated by Original: Henry Weinstein, 'Contesting the Bar to Asylum. The Justice Department asks for review of a Congolese woman's case. Activists say the denial implies rape is OK in investigations', *LA Times*, 21 August 2006, online at:

www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/politics/la-na-asylum21aug21.1,1637594.story?coll=la-news-politics-national&track=crosspromo.

she apply for political asylum with the help of a fellow Congolese.

However she was initially refused asylum on the basis of lack of credibility and was told, *inter alia*, that it was not credible that she had left her country without saying goodbye to her family. In addition the initial decision stated that the brutality described in the case was '*simply not comprehensible*'.

But the decision that caused dismay amongst human rights lawyers was that of the US 5th Circuit Court of Appeals based in New Orleans in March 2006. It did not dispute the facts in the case and dismissed the immigration judge's key findings:

'There is nothing in the record to suggest that aliens fleeing from prison to a different country usually go home to say goodbye. ...[And] that brutality is extraordinary does not render it implausible... Jews fleeing Nazi Germany and describing the concentration camp atrocities would have been denied asylum because the brutality they described would be "incomprehensible". ...The record shows that the Congolese guards apparently told [Monique M] that she deserved to be raped and die because she was a criminal. This justification for brutality is far from incomprehensible.'

Despite this, the Court stated that Monique M did not qualify for refugee status because she could not prove she would be persecuted for one of the five Convention reasons, notwithstanding the imputed political dimension of her case. Moreover, the Court stated that the rapes and detention she suffered were part of a '*legitimate investigation*'.

The *Los Angeles Times* reports on the reaction of Eleanor Acer, an attorney with Human Rights First in New York, who declared:

'The decision is very disturbing because it essentially views government investigations that involve torture and rape as some kind of legitimate criminal investigation. Repressive regimes often jail people who are in

opposition to them and simply say they are conducting criminal investigations'. A joint brief was filed with the Executive Office of Immigration Review on behalf of Monique M by attorneys Anibal Martinez, a Justice Department lawyer, and Jayne Fleming of Oakland, a specialist in political asylum cases. They brought new evidence showing that the Congolese prosecutor was a criminal later convicted of murder. And law professors Karen Musalo of UC Hastings College of Law in San Francisco, and Director of the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies, and Joseph Vail of the University of Houston Law Center requested the case to be reheard citing a December 1994 United Nations resolution denouncing systematic rape as a weapon of war.²

Other international news

Pakistan: Changes in rape law threatens government's coalition

A group of 68 lawmakers from a coalition of six Islamic groups threatened to vacate their parliamentary seats if Pakistan's government goes ahead and seeks approval through Parliament for changes to a rape law that has been continuously criticised by human rights activists.³ The lawmakers declared that they '*will render every sacrifice for the protection of the Shariah (traditional Islamic) laws*'. A walkout could force by-elections.

Under the Hudood Ordinances, in place since 1979, prosecuting a rape case requires testimony from four witnesses, making it impossible for victims of sexual assault to seek redress through the criminal justice system. The law also renders a woman who claims she was raped but is unable to prove

² The full story reported by the Los Angeles Times can be found at:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/politics/la-na-asylum21aug21,1,1637594.story?coll=la-news-politics-national&track=crosspromo>.

³ Source: Story circulated by fjn@feministpeacenet.org, to join go to fjn_discussion@yahooogroups.com. Original: The Associated Press,

'Rape law rankles some Pakistan lawmakers', 5 September 2006, Islamabad, online at:

www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/world/4164939.html.

her case guilty of adultery, a 'crime' punishable by death. Thus violence and abuse against women are protected by impunity.

The ruling Pakistan Muslim Party, which has a majority in the Parliament, supports the end to the four-witness requirement. However according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), amendments to the Hudood Ordinances are '*grossly inadequate and fall far short of the reform required to end legalized discrimination and deter violence against women*'.⁴

The organisation contends that the proposed changes are minor and fail to address fundamental problems with the laws, including discriminatory provisions according to which sex outside of marriage remains criminalised and the value of a woman's testimony is half of that of a man's. In addition, rape within marriage will still not be recognised and punishments for various offences under Islamic Shari'a such as stoning to death, lashing and amputation, remain in force. HRW calls for the total repealing of the Hudood Ordinances as recommended by Pakistan's National Commission on the Status of Women in August 2003.

In addition, HRW calls for an improvement in support services such as shelters and burn units for women, a public awareness campaign about the laws and better training for police to deal with victims of sexual assault. The measures would ensure the country complies with its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which calls on states to modify or abolish laws that discriminate against women.

⁴ Human Rights Watch, HRW Press Release, 'Proposed reforms to Hudood Laws fall short', New York, 6 September 2006, online at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/09/06/pakist14124.htm>.

Sudan: Rape still used as means of ethnic cleansing

At the end of August, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) reported that in Kalma, Darfur's largest camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs), South Darfur, more than 200 women have been sexually assaulted in the last few weeks alone. In addition, about 200 more women have been punched, beaten up and kicked by unidentified armed men. Kurt Tjossem of the IRC, who conducted the research talked of '*a massive spike in figures. We are used to hearing of two to four incidents of sexual assault per month in Kalma camp.*'

According to local women, the rise in the number of attacks is due to the reduced presence of the African Union (AU) patrols in the area. Since last April, African peacekeepers have been providing only one patrol due to limited funding compared to three per week before. The attacks occur when women leave the camp to collect firewood. Women have to walk several miles in the bushes but as one of them told IRC: '*We have chosen to risk being raped rather than let the men risk being killed.*' The women asked for more AU presence but the forces' mandate expires in September and they have requested that their mission be transferred to the UN. Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir said that Sudan's army would fight any UN forces sent to Darfur.

United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, believes that this new conflict in Darfur has actually drawn attention away from the sexual violence of the Sudanese Army forces and Janjawid militia towards girls and women in Sudan. He stressed: '*Girls have been targeted in inter-ethnic conflicts as a deliberate form of humiliation of a group, and as a means of ethnic cleansing. Rape has been used to force displacement.*'

According to the UN Commissioner of Human Rights, last year 40 percent of victims were less than 18. And medical organisation *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) treated about 500 raped women and girls between October 2004 and February 2005 but the

charity believes that many women did not report the incident or get treatment. MSF reported that out of these 500 cases, 81 percent claimed to have been assaulted by the Sudanese military or militia groups and 28 percent were raped more than once.

India: Woman with HIV told to abort by medical staff

A 23-year-old Indian woman had to carry out an abortion herself six months into her pregnancy because she was tested positive for the HIV virus.⁵ The woman was advised to abort herself and left with the inducing pills after medical staff in a hospital in Kolkata, West Bengal, refused to assist her due to her infection.

There are an estimated 5.2 million people infected with HIV in India according to governmental figures but many face social ostracism and discrimination, including being denied access to hospitals and schools.

Cameroon: Breast-Ironing, a practice unheard of

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) had the opportunity to speak to a member of a group of young women, called *'The Tantines'* (aunts) from Cameroon, who are giving training to young girls regarding health issues such as teenage pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and to highlight the dangers of a practice called *'breast ironing'*.⁶

The latter is rarely discussed, let alone in public. But according to Bessem Bissong, *'breast ironing'* is widely practiced in all ten provinces of Cameroon and affects about twenty per cent of young girls. It is however generally a well-kept secret between

mothers and daughters. In many cases fathers are unaware of what their daughters are going through.

'Breast ironing' aims to suppress the growth of breasts in adolescent girls; the *'process'* is carried out by massaging or pressing or, in some cases, using hot objects like stones and wooden pestles; herbs or petrol are also used. Bissong said this bodily mutilation is extremely painful and traumatising for young girls and has serious health consequences too: It can cause itching, abscesses, milk discharge, dissymmetry of the breasts, cysts, breast infection and severe fever. The practice is justified mainly to prevent men from being attracted to young girls, or to keep girls from engaging in sexual relationships at a very young age and avoid teenage pregnancies. The *'Tantines'* have produced leaflets and used radio and television spots to raise awareness but some people resist any change as they see the practice as a manifestation of their culture.

International actions & events

Events highlight continued plight of Romani women enduring forced sterilisation

On 15 August, the US Helsinki Commission, the US government's human rights watchdog agency, heard expert testimonies on the problem of coercive sterilization in the Czech Republic. Two days later, human rights experts and victims of extreme abuses testified before the United Nations women's rights committee (CEDAW) on the same issues.⁷ Also on 17 August, a public event was held in Ostrava, Czech Republic, to protest against the continuous failure of the Czech authorities to provide legal remedies to victims of coercive sterilisation. With reference to these events, NGO partners had prepared an NGO Shadow report and presented it to UN CEDAW Committee. This report concludes that *'legal protection*

⁵ Source: Story circulated by fpn_atrocities@yahoo.com, Original story: AFP, 'HIV-positive Indian has to abort her own foetus', in *Middle East Times*, 1 September 2006, online at <http://metimes.com/print.php?StoryID=20060901-064425-3772r>.

⁶ Source: Story circulated by fpn_atrocities@yahoo.com, The full interview can be found online at: www.awid.org/go.php?stid=1623.

⁷ Source: Original, the European Roma Rights Centre, story circulated by the Human Rights Education and Associates (www.hrea.org), 15 August 2006.

against discrimination remains insufficient in the Czech Republic'. According to their findings, the women of Czech Republic are still the victims of human rights abuses whilst official bodies and the authorities have been failing to provide a legal mechanism for compensation for the victims. The NGO Shadow report is available at:

www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2136 and at:

www.llp.cz/subdomains/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=14.

Conference on Gender and Migration, Toronto (Canada)

The FCJ Refugee Centre organises this conference on 28 September, 2006 (from 9 am to 9 pm) at The Church of the Holy Trinity, 10 Trinity Square in Toronto. Themes to be discussed at the conference include status, trafficking, and enforcement as they impact and are impacted by gender issues, including detention, removals, and other enforcement mechanisms; other issues planned for discussion are power imbalances and challenges faced by women of different statuses, including domestic abuse, barriers to family reunification and parent-child issues. All discussions will address trafficking in people for domestic, sexual and other indentured forms of labour, with an emphasis on critical analysis of both the 'genderisation' of trafficking and economic globalisation.

The afternoon features two sessions aimed at developing images of a just system, and planning collective actions to bring them closer to reality. There will also be some performance art and art installation as well as the award-winning play 'Once Upon a Time a King'.

To register and for more details, visit fcjrefugeecentre@on.aibn.com. Free for refugees and non-status people.

UK News

Women forced to stay with abusive partner out of desperation, charity says

Asylum Welcome, an asylum welfare organisation that helps 880 asylum seekers and refugees in Oxfordshire with support and advice, has warned of 150 failed asylum seekers in Oxford, many of whom are living underground as they fear being deported by the authorities.⁸ These include the seriously ill, pregnant women and other vulnerable people who are left to live in destitution. The organisation is particularly concerned about the welfare of women who, it says, are forced to 'do things they don't want to do'. According to the daily online newspaper thisisoxfordshire.co.uk, Asylum Welcome family worker Ritah Kaala described the choices women face to survive as follows:

'Some women who have come here alone and met a partner here are forced to stay with that partner for support. One woman has told me she would rather stay here with a violent partner than be removed. Another said she was sleeping with many different partners as she needed money to live and somewhere to stay. It's the only way to survive - that's how desperation drives people.'

'Failed' asylum seekers are either left in limbo as they are denied the right to stay in the UK and their country will not accept them; or they are without any resources because they are not allowed to work and are waiting for benefits to come through. Mercedes Cumberbatch, Asylum Welcome director, said:

'Either through administrative errors, lost documents or administrative delays, they are not receiving the benefits to which they are entitled. Some are too frightened to sign up

⁸ Story circulated by NCADC News Service, original story: Rosalnd Miles, 'Failed refugees "left destitute"', in thisisoxfordshire.co.uk, 22 August 2006, at www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/tiooxmail/display.var.887973.0.failed_refugees_left_destitute.php.

for support as it requires them to take all reasonable steps to return to their countries voluntarily.'

Destitute asylum seekers survive on charity handouts or friends' support. Most come from countries under repressive regimes or affected by civil war and where their lives would be in danger if sent back. Those who fled torture and/or detention and claimed asylum in another country are at even greater risk of persecution if they are forcibly returned home. Asylum Welcome calls on the Government to undertake an immediate reform of asylum seeker support and encouraged its volunteers and supporters to write to their MPs.

Other organisations campaigning on the issue of destitution of asylum seekers include: NCADC, SERASC (South of England Refugee & Asylum Seeker Consortium), the Refugee Council, Amnesty International and Church Action on Poverty and many local agencies around the country.⁹ In addition, the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) has highlighted the need to end policies that lead to withdrawal of accommodation and financial support for asylum seekers and ultimately to destitution. In a submission to the Joint Committee on Human Rights into the treatment of asylum seekers, the CIH has expressed concern that *'a growing number of asylum seekers are forced to leave accommodation, are rejected for financial support and are unable to access legal advice and so are becoming destitute.'*¹⁰

related project

Destitute asylum seekers monthly drop in project

A small group of people based at New North London Synagogue in Finchley set up a monthly drop in project in January 2006 to offer support to destitute asylum seekers

⁹ Source: NCADC News Service, 5 September 2006. More details can be found in ICAR Briefing (May 2006) at www.icar.org.uk/?lid=6575.

¹⁰ Source: Story circulated by www.franklist.info, original source: 'CIH urges government to end policies that can', undated, at: www.cih.org/news/view.php?id=637.

whose claims have been rejected by the government. The voluntary project offers informal advice from immigration lawyers, medical check ups from doctors and advice from therapists. Other support includes hot food and drinks, a bag of basic dried/tinned foodstuffs to take away, help with transport costs, provision of second-hand clothes. There is an outdoor play area for children who come along with their parents.

The drop in runs from 2-5pm the first Sunday of every month. The project welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds and needs more to help set up the drop in before asylum seekers arrive and to help clear up afterwards, to help first timers fill out basic questionnaires, to serve food and drink and to organise queuing systems for lawyers, doctors etc. The venue is Old Barn Community Centre, Fallows Close, off Tarling Road, East Finchley. For more information please contact Diane Taylor on diane.taylor@talk21.com. Anyone who would like to donate money can send cheques payable to New North London Synagogue, to NNLS, the Manor House, 80 East End Road, Finchley, London N3 2SY, stating that donations are intended for the destitute asylum seekers project.

UK: not enough done to tackle child trafficking, report warns

UNICEF's and Terre des Hommes' joint report on child trafficking, called *'Action to Prevent Child Trafficking in South Eastern Europe (SEE)'* warns that the UK is not doing enough to prevent the trafficking of young people into the country.¹¹

'If a child is picked up who is being trafficked, they might end up in a detention centre with asylum seekers or a foster home. These options don't give them a secure place to go. They leave them scarred and vulnerable and at risk of being re-trafficked,' said Mr. Radford of UNICEF UK. *'Trafficked*

¹¹ Source: UNICEF Press Release, 'Prevention efforts too little, too late; prosecution of traffickers not sole solution', 30 August 2006 at www.unicef.org/media/media_35499.html.

children need a "reflection period", where they can be offered counselling, rehabilitation and a chance to decide what they want to do next.'

In the four years running up to 2003, 250 children trafficked to the UK were rescued by the authorities. But UNICEF insists that this figure is only 'the tip of the iceberg.' The report mentions that children are smuggled into the U.K for domestic slavery, begging and sexual exploitation. UNICEF UK has demanded more help from ministers to support trafficked children. The Home Office said that it is taking steps to discourage child trafficking such as team of social workers posted at ports, and has made trafficking a crime punishable by up to 14 years in jail. A new Human Trafficking centre is also due to open in October. Graham Maxwell, Deputy Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police and Programme director at the Centre said the new centre would provide welfare support for victims and aim to increase awareness on trafficking among public sector staff.

The United Nations estimates the number of children trafficked every year in the world at about 1.2 million. According to Maxwell, an 'innocent 15-year-old' could be sold for £8,000 in the UK.

The report's contents, introduction and executive summary can be found at: www.unicef.it/flex/files/D.d1189c9b66a599d9e013/Child_Trafficking_South_Eastern_Europe_Report_2006_Intro.pdf.

related publications

La Strada International have published a response to the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Sigma Huda. For a copy please contact Anti-Slavery International, tel: +44 (0)20 7501 8920, email: info@antislavery.org.

Also: Anti-Slavery International's latest report on trafficking for forced labour in the UK contains information on incidence and

the nature of this form of trafficking in the UK. The report can be downloaded at: www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/Trafficking%20for%20Forced%20Labour%20UK%20Country%20Report.pdf.

related news

Increase in sexual exploitation of boys A situational analysis carried out by ECPAT International [End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography And the Trafficking of children for sexual purposes] in collaboration with its partner organizations in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan shows that the extent of the prostitution of boys is much bigger than generally speculated.¹² Boys are sexually exploited at a very young age. Children who live and work on the streets and those working in exploitative environments or lack families are very vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. The study can be accessed at www.ecpat.net.

Also: Romania ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking on Human Beings on 21 August 2006.

UK projects & events

Update on Women for Refugee Women's activities and news

Women for Refugee Women is a project based in London which aims to highlight the failure of the UK Government and the courts to recognise gender-based persecution in asylum decisions. It also aims to highlight the impact on women of state-enforced destitution, indefinite immigration detention and violent deportation.

The project has just sent an update on the situation of two women asylum seekers who have been actively advocating for the rights of refugee women in the UK. One is Harriet

¹² Source : Integral text reproduced from Trafficking Network Update, September 2006, available online at : www.antislavery.org/homepage/traffic%20news/trafficnewsindex2006.htm.

Anyangokolo, who spoke at the Women for Refugee Women event at the ICA in London on 16 May. Harriet escaped rape in detention in Uganda, and then led a hunger strike in Yarl's Wood detention centre. She has just received refugee status. 'Begum', who was fleeing forced marriage, also present at the ICA event, has been deported despite great effort from her supporters. She is now living in hiding in India. The stories of these women and other asylum seeking women appear on the website, www.refugeewomen.com.

Women for Refugee Women says that these outcomes show both the hope and the fear facing all women who come to this country seeking refuge. The project will soon provide an update about the presentation of the statement in support of the rights of refugee women to the Home Office. The statement can be read at www.refugeewomen.com; and to sign the statement, use the contact form online or email info@refugeewomen.com.

Exhibition celebrating the life of Palestinian women

Artist for human rights Paula Cox presents a free exhibition of her new work 'Celebrating the life of Palestinian women', including a retrospective. Paula Cox has worked with Amnesty International as an artist for human rights since 1988. Of this work, she said: 'As artist in residence in Palestine, I was given a sensitive insight into the rich but devastated Palestinian culture as I documented the daily lives of women who are the innocent victims of a brutal conflict.'

Where: Human Rights Action Centre, 17 - 25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA from 11 to 20 September 2006. Open every day between 11am and 3pm, including Saturday and Sunday. Private view on Thursday 14 September from 6.30-8.30pm. To book email: hrac.bookings@amnesty.org.uk.

Free Quality Assurance Training Programme for Community Organisations

Migrant Organisations' Development Agency (MODA) and Islington Citizens Advice Bureau

are offering free training to community organisations in quality assurance including strategic planning, fundraising strategy, practical fundraising and monitoring and evaluation. Dates: 4 to 12 October. You can book one or more training days. Venue: SAVO, 8th Floor, Hannibal House, Elephant and Castle, London SE5 6TE (Elephant & Castle station). The training is free to community organisations but a refundable booking fee of £30 will apply. You can book online at www.moda.org.uk. For more details, contact Suj Ahmed, tel: 020 7561 7459, email suja@islingtoncab.org.uk, or Victor Momodu, tel: 020 7561 7457, email victor@islingtoncab.org.uk.

Conference on Refugees and International Law, December 2006

Oxford University's Refugees Studies Centre is hosting an international conference on 15-16 December 2006 in Oxford entitled 'Refugees and International Law: The Challenge of Protection'. Key speakers include Professor Goodwin-Gill, Professor Walter Kalin, representative of UN Secretary General on Human Rights and members of the UN Human Rights Committee. For further details and registration forms: <http://refugeelaw.qeh.ox.ac.uk>.

forthcoming publication

UK

Women Against Rape has announced that it is about to publish a Dossier compiled jointly with Black Women's Rape Action Project entitled 'Misjudging Rape: Rape and the Gender Guidelines in Asylum Appeals' in September 2006. The Dossier will examine 'rulings made by Asylum Judges in rape cases and the extent to which they do or do not comply with the Immigration Appellate Authority's Asylum Gender Guidelines.'

To subscribe to the newsletter, contact WAR directly at Crossroads Women's Centre, 230a Kentish Town Rd, London NW5 2AB, Tel: 020 7482 2496, Fax: 020 7209 4761, Email:

war@womenagainstrape.net.
www.womenagainstrape.net.

Website:

new publications

international

Afghanistan: Domestic Violence rife and committed with impunity says UN Study

A study conducted by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) found that sexual, physical or psychological violence against women affects all branches of Afghan society, regardless of the woman's marital status or her level of education or employment.¹³ The study was based on more than 1,300 cases reported to the Afghan authorities between January 2003 and June 2005. It reveals that attacks against women usually take place with impunity and in more than eight out of ten incidents are committed by a male family member. Even when not a family member, the perpetrator is often known to the victim. In 10 per cent of cases, women are the perpetrators.

UNIFEM says local women fleeing violence need improved access to public services because the family, which is the traditional support structure for women, is also often the source of the violence. According to UNIFEM, safe houses and legal aid programmes are limited to cities such as Kabul, Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif.

A copy of the report can be found online at: <http://afghanistan.unifem.org/>.

¹³ UNIFEM, 'Domestic Violence in Afghanistan is 'Endemic,' Perpetrators Go Unpunished', 14 August 2006, online at: www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=508.

Immigration and Refugee Law: Cases, Materials, and Commentary

This new book published in Canada surveys the historical origins of contemporary immigration and refugee law and provides several theoretical frameworks for normative critique. National migration law and policy is examined in a global context, and brings to the surface race, gender, and class dimensions. Also explored in the book are current issues affecting Canadian domestic refugee law as well as current pressures on the international refugee regime, including security concerns and immigration post 9/11. The book also provides a regularly updated companion website to reflect new developments in this fast-paced field and offers numerous website references, graphs, charts, and statistical lists illustrating immigration patterns.

Authors: Emily Carasco, Sharryn Aiken, Donald Galloway, Audrey Macklin, Publisher: Emond Montgomery Publications, Toronto, September 2006. ISBN 1-55239-123-X.

Land Conflicts and their Impact on Refugee Women's Livelihoods in South Western Uganda

This paper presents the preliminary findings of a study on land conflicts between refugees and host communities in South Western Uganda and their impact on refugee women's livelihoods. The overall objective of the study was to establish the gendered impact of land conflicts on livelihoods of refugee women, in particular their impact on household livelihoods. View the full document in PDF online at: www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/AMM-F-6T6DUU?OpenDocument

related news

UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research Series: '*Refugees in the "sick role": stereotyping refugees and eroding refugee rights*', by Vanessa Pupavac, UNHCR, Research Paper No. 128, August 2006.

Activities of migrant women's project published

An article on the work of French organisation CIMADE, which supports migrant women who have experienced violence, is available in French at the following link: <http://terra.rezo.net/article476.html>. It provides information on CIMADE's activities since the creation of its women's project in 2004 to 2005 and on the organisation's future objectives. It also highlights the practical and legal obstacles to the provision of protection against violence against women, including a limited interpretation of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Full reference: Morgane GUEGUEN, '*La permanence de la Cimade Ile-de-France pour les femmes étrangères victimes de violences : 2004-2005, actions réalisées et actions envisagées*', Communication lors de la Rencontre TERRA du 31 janvier 2006 '*Freins et obstacles à l'action associative pour les femmes persécutées*', TERRA-Editions, collection '*Reflets*', 6 Septembre 2006.

online resources

international & UK

Online Gender Tool

The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) has launched the first-ever Gender 'Wiki', an online tool facilitating and increasing the exchange of knowledge-sharing on capacity-building activities and resources worldwide. The website is in English and Spanish and opens onto a world map which shows institutions and trainings relating to gender in all regions of the world. The tool is based on 'Wiki' software which allows users to edit the information on the site and add any information s/he finds important or useful. The website contains a navigation tool which gives access to information on training that has or is due to take place on various topics (e.g. domestic violence, gender-based violence, gender and human rights, etc.), as well as training materials and recent changes made to the website. Online at: [\[instraw.org/wiki/training/index.php/Main_Page\]\(http://instraw.org/wiki/training/index.php/Main_Page\).](http://www.un-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

related online tool

CEDAW Assessment reports

The reports are based on the CEDAW Assessment Tool, a tool designed to examine a nation's laws and measure the degree to which these laws protect the rights of women as mandated by CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.¹⁴ The tool was developed in 2002 by the Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (CEELI) a public service project of the American Bar Association (ABA). CEELI's objectives include advancing the rule of law by supporting the law reform process in Central and Eastern Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East.

Designed to uncover the legal obstacles that frustrate the achievement of greater gender equality, the tool separately measures the degree to which women, in practice, are accorded the rights and status guaranteed to them under CEDAW. A major focus of the tool is on 'real life' impediments to equality, some not necessarily the product of poor or non-existent legislation. To date, CEELI has conducted the CEDAW Assessment Tool in Armenia, Georgia, Serbia and Russia in February 2006 (all online at www.abanet.org/ceeli/publications/cedaw/home.html). Another assessment report is currently being conducted in Moldova. For more information, contact Michael Maya at mmaya@abaceeli.org and Jennifer Denton at jdenton@abaceeli.org.

Gender handbook for Humanitarian Action

'*Women, Girls Boys & Men, Different Needs – Equal Opportunities, A Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action*' sets forth standards for

¹⁴ All information drawn and edited from CEELI's website at: www.abanet.org/ceeli/publications/cedaw/home.html. Story initially circulated by NEWS POLSKA at www.newww.org.pl/.

the integration of gender issues from the outset, i.e. the early response phase, of a new complex emergency or disaster, so that humanitarian services provided neither exacerbate nor inadvertently put people at risk; reach their target audience; and have maximum positive impact.

Prepared by members of the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC), it aims to provide actors in the field with guidance on analysis, planning and actions to ensure that the needs, contributions and capacities of women, girls, boys and men are considered in all aspects of humanitarian response. It also offers activity checklists to assist in monitoring gender mainstreaming. The handbook is also a useful tool to make sure gender issues are included in needs assessments, contingency planning and evaluations of how these issues have been addressed in a humanitarian situation. Online at:

www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/LTIO-6SXXN5W?OpenDocument,

New UNHCR's webpage on 'rule of law'

According to UNHCR, '*Respect for the rule of law and human rights forms the essence of the protection of refugees, returnees and stateless persons.*' A new page entitled '*UNHCR's involvement with the rule of law and transitional justice*' at www.unhcr.org/ruleoflaw contains information regarding aspects of UNHCR's work which focus on assisting in the strengthening of legal structures that would enhance the rule of law on behalf of persons of concern to UNHCR. This work includes areas of intervention relating to voluntary repatriation, reconciliation, transitional justice and statelessness.

An extensive list of '*Suggested Reading*' has been included, with direct links to the full-texts of the documents listed. The web page also includes links to external websites. The webpage can be visited at the above-mentioned direct URL, and also by clicking on the section link entitled '*Protecting refugees*' (www.unhcr.org/protect) in the left

navigation menu of the UNHCR website, under '*Legal Protection /Capacity-Building*'.

New 'Lots Of Big Ideas' Blog site for refugees and asylum seekers

Clients from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (MF) have launched a new blogging site, i.e. an online writing community that allows them to interact with a global audience. One of the new project's aims is to enable asylum seekers and refugees to change public opinion by hearing about real stories. Lots of Big Ideas or LOBI is the first interactive site dedicated solely to the work of exiled people living in the UK.

Some of the first pieces to be posted on the LOBI site are the works of clients that have been involved in the *Write to Life* project, which started seven years ago. A number of clients have just returned from the International Book Festival in Edinburgh where they presented their work. MF plans to open the site to asylum seekers and refugees from across the globe so that they can submit their work and comment on the work of other contributors, or take part in critical discussions. LOBI is also a means to give roots to people who are often isolated since their arrival in the UK and provides them with '*a home where they will always be able to go – a place where they can keep their thoughts, express themselves and their personality*' whilst meeting other people. Log on to LOBI following the link: <http://lotsofbigideas.blogspot.com>.

related online tool

The Refugee Council has updated its website with new sections, for more see www.refugeecouncil.org.uk.

women's asylum news

Produced by RWRP (for more information on this issue, please contact Sophia Ceneda)
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