

# women's asylum news

refugee women's resource project @ asylumaid

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Please send any information that you would like to see published in our next edition by 12 June 2006 (see above email address).

## Gender sensitive issues often not handled by female interviewers and interpreters, UNHCR says

In the context of the *Quality Initiative Project*, which started in March 2004, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) agency released a summary of its latest study focussing on assessing the quality of asylum interviews in the UK. The study found that '*a significant number of interviews were observed in which a poor interview climate was created.*' This finding is particularly worrying for all asylum seekers.

It is of great concern for women asylum seekers too when combined with another finding according to which '*gender sensitive issues such as rape, sexual assault, forced marriage or domestic violence were often not being handled by interviewers and interpreters of the relevant gender.*' The study also found that in most cases, Home Office caseworkers prepared for interviews insufficiently, with little prior research being undertaken. In addition, on numerous occasions UNHCR auditors observed verbal exchanges between interpreters and the Home Office interviewers that were not translated.

The UNHCR's report was released only two months after RWRP published its own study on the implementation of the Home Office gender guidance during the

asylum process in the UK. One of the main findings of RWRP's research, entitled '*Lip service' or implementation? The Home Office Gender Guidance and women's asylum claims in the UK*, was a lack of provision of female interviewers and interpreters, often impacting on women's ability to tell their stories in full, thus undermining their chances for a fair hearing and decision on their case.

The UNHCR calls for the introduction of automatic gender-sensitive interviewing and interpreting with immediate effect.

RWRP's report can be found on Asylum Aid's website at [www.asylumaid.org.uk](http://www.asylumaid.org.uk) or contact Malak Bager-Niakan on 0207 377 5123 for a hard copy.

Are you currently receiving Women's Asylum News by post? If yes, could you receive it by email instead and help us save money to dedicate to our legal service provision instead? Please send your request to change your details to [wan@asylumaid.org.uk](mailto:wan@asylumaid.org.uk).

### Other UK News

#### Newspaper uncovers '*sex-for-asylum*' scandal at Home Office

A Sunday newspaper, *The Observer*, has led an investigation uncovering a senior immigration official offering sex in exchange for helping a young Zimbabwean woman with her asylum

claim.<sup>1</sup> He contacted her via text messages and phone calls after exchanging contact details with her. The young asylum seeker had suffered gender violence in her home country when she was raped by a high-ranking member of the ruling party and was subsequently targeted when trying to file a case against him. She also suffered domestic violence at the hands of her husband to whom she was forcibly married in the UK, a high profile member of the main opposition party in Zimbabwe. The young woman who fled her marriage fears for her life if returned to Zimbabwe due to her bringing on accusation of rape against the official but also due to her husband's political activities.

According to the newspaper, by attempting a relationship and offering to help with her application, the officer who has now been suspended acted in breach of immigration service guidelines. His actions constituted also a conflict of interest. A similar '*sex-for-asylum*' scandal was unveiled by the *Sun* newspaper in January but further investigations concluded that no

#### API on children's claims updated

The Home Office have updated their Asylum Policy Instruction (API) to asylum caseworkers dealing with children's claims – both accompanied and unaccompanied. The API (April 2006) is available at

<sup>1</sup> The full story published by The Observer on 21 May can be found online at: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/politics/story/0,,1779772,00.html> and <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/politics/story/0,,1779783,00.html>.

[www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/laws\\_policy/policy\\_instructions/apis/children.Maincontent.0001.file.tmp/Children%20d%201304061.pdf](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/laws_policy/policy_instructions/apis/children.Maincontent.0001.file.tmp/Children%20d%201304061.pdf)

### RWRP News

#### Women for Refugee Women

RWRP is one of several organisations supporting a new campaign, *Women for Refugee Women*, which aims to highlight the failure of the UK Government and the courts to recognise gender-based persecution in asylum decisions, and the impact on women of state-enforced destitution, indefinite immigration detention and violent deportation. The group is working alongside existing organisations to bring the issues to a wide audience. They organised an event at the ICA on 16 May where high-profile women from the arts, politics and media met women asylum seekers to learn at first hand more about the problems facing them. For more information see [www.refugeewomen.com](http://www.refugeewomen.com).

#### NASS domestic violence policy

RWRP coordinates a group of stakeholders liaising with the Home Office on refugee women's issues. At the first such meeting six months ago the group reminded the Home Office of the need to monitor its Domestic Violence policy bulletin and obtained agreement to be consulted on this.

There are many barriers for reporting domestic violence for any women, but

for refugee and asylum seeking women these barriers seem to be more challenging. The isolation created by dispersal as well as language and cultural barriers may mean that many women continue to suffer in silence. Lack of adequate support or intervention due to unclear policies between domestic violence support services and public agencies, for example social services, the Home Office and women's refuges is also a concern.

Many public agencies for example, are unaware of the NASS domestic violence policy bulletin 70, published in January 2004. This policy bulletin is essential information for anyone involved in supporting or advising asylum seeking women who have suffered domestic violence (DV) in the UK.

It outlines procedures that NASS case officers should follow to deal with any report that a NASS supported woman is suffering from DV. Crucially, the domestic violence policy bulletin states that any asylum seeking woman who reports DV should be safely re-housed if that is her wish. The policy bulletin identifies several options in relation to alternative accommodation. These options include, a move to alternative NASS accommodation, NASS funding for a place in a woman's refuge or a temporary NASS contribution towards the cost of other kinds of accommodation, including private accommodation.

The bulletin states that NASS accommodation providers are expected to have a clear statement on domestic violence policy. Among other requirements, NASS expects them to

maintain emergency response arrangements so that they can react quickly to crisis situations, such as a woman leaving her abusive partner. The importance of speed and confidentiality in dealing with DV reports are acknowledged in the bulletin. Accommodation providers and one-stop agencies are given authority to act without prior NASS consent in order to transfer women to safe accommodation immediately. NASS also state that emergency cash support will be set up without delay.

The policy bulletin also mentions the need for a '*case conference*' to be held in the light of any reports of DV to NASS. The case conference is a meeting of individuals and agencies involved in supporting or advising the woman who has reported DV. The woman herself will also be invited and it should be held at a venue that is accessible for her. This meeting should be held within one week of the report of DV. The aim of the meeting is agree a course of action, with the woman's consent, for example, alternative accommodation, any action to be taken against the perpetrator by NASS and whether the matter should be reported to the police or to social services. The bulletin also highlights the need to advise the woman to consider whether she needs to take action in relation to her immigration status, for example, claiming asylum in her own right if she was a dependant on the claim of her separated partner.

The Refugee Council held a consultation event with RCOs and women RCOs to respond to the Mayor of London's consultation on the second London

Domestic Violence Strategy.<sup>2</sup> Consultation participants raised their concerns regarding the NASS domestic violence policy and their experiences indicate that this policy provides inadequate support for victims of domestic violence and is not appropriately administered, implemented or monitored. There is clearly an urgent need to monitor and assess the implementation of the policy.

NASS policy bulletins are available, under the '*applying in the UK*' section at, [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk).

### UK projects & events

#### Public Meeting to Stop Honour Crimes

Following the murder of 20-year-old Banaz Mahmoud Babakir Agha, another woman from the Kurdish community who was killed by her family, the Kurdistan Refugee Women's Organisation and the Middle East Centre for Women's Rights are holding a public meeting to stop Honour Crimes. For further details please contact Sawsan Salim on Tel: 0207 263 1027 or Mob: 077488 51125. Email: [krwo\\_org@yahoo.com](mailto:krwo_org@yahoo.com).

#### related campaign

A new Manchester-based campaign against '*honour*' crimes, '*Stop Killing Women*', is appealing for donations and support to run a conference. For more information

<sup>2</sup> See joint response at: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/publications/pub007.htm#domestic\\_violence](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/publications/pub007.htm#domestic_violence).

contact Aqila Hashmi (Chair) by email at: [stopkillingwomen@googlemail.com](mailto:stopkillingwomen@googlemail.com), Shabana Baig (Secretary) [grampu1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:grampu1@yahoo.co.uk), Mansoor Hassan (Motivator), [editor@thecrime.org](mailto:editor@thecrime.org) or Tel: 07979 636017, or Hummera Aamir (Executive Member) by email at: [hummera.aamir@hotmail.com](mailto:hummera.aamir@hotmail.com) or by post to Mansoor Hassan C/O NUJ Manchester Branch Arthur House 5th Floor Chorlton street Manchester M1 3FH.

### **Campaign Against Sex Trafficking**

The UK section of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILFP) has been running a campaign against Sex Trafficking since March until Parliament rises for the summer. There are 4 cards addressed separately to the Home Secretary, the Minister for Trade and Industry, the Minister for Women and the signatory's own MP.

The text on each card states that the growing trade in human beings is in violation of Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is making large sums of money for the organisers at each stage of the trafficking chain. It expresses regret at the absence in the Government's Consultation Paper, *Tackling Human Trafficking* of any steps to redress the current culture in which trade in human bodies is seen as acceptable. It asks for the criminalisation of people using children under 18 as child sex abusers. It asks also for the introduction of a criminal offence for every person who buys sex in the UK or abroad from a person who could reasonably be suspected to have been illegally trafficked

If you would like to take part in the campaign, all details can be found on WILFP's website at:

[www.ukwilpf.gn.apc.org/NewsArticles/Mar06ReEdSexTrInfo.wps.rtf](http://www.ukwilpf.gn.apc.org/NewsArticles/Mar06ReEdSexTrInfo.wps.rtf).

### **Human rights and human wrongs Addressing the needs of female asylum seekers and refugees**

This full day conference entitled '*Addressing the social, medical and legal needs of vulnerable female asylum seekers and refugees*', will investigate the challenges faced by the various professionals in seeking to respect the rights of this particularly vulnerable group and the wrongs perpetrated and the consequences of this. A training pack will be provided.

The aim of the conference, organised by Merseyside refugee & asylum seekers pre & post natal support group (MRANG), is to spark a wider debate on the treatment of vulnerable female asylum seekers and their children and investigate what changes might be brought about to recognise their fundamental rights. The day is of specific interest to those professionals and community groups dealing with vulnerable, traumatised and displaced women asylum seekers and refugees.

Date: Wednesday 21 June 2006, Venue: Liverpool Football Club Anfield. Cost: Free for asylum seekers, reduced fee for those facing hardship and £35 for voluntary sector/charities and £55:00 per delegate for corporate. (Reduction of £5.00 per delegate for every group booking of three or more). To book call

the Administrator, Julia on 07947704827 or Project Manager Louise 07904 831620.

### National Conference on Refugee Women and Integration

Refugee Action is organising a national conference on refugee women's involvement in integration, in June 2006. As part of the programme for the day, they would like to have poetry reading by refugee women. Asther Hagos, Refugee Action's Gender Specialist, says '*Tell us your story - write a poem about a woman who inspired you, could be your mother, daughter or a famous person.*' The poems can be in any form, but not longer than 30 lines.

The poems will be judged by refugee poets and the first and second winners will read their poem on the day Prizes will be awarded. Contact Asther at 020 7735 5361 or [AstherH@refugee-action.org.uk](mailto:AstherH@refugee-action.org.uk).

### related information

Refugee Action has also started a new campaign to highlight the issue of '*failed*' asylum seeking families facing destitution in the UK after their support is withdrawn. The Government has recently implemented Section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 which states that families whose claims have failed are to be cut off from all support unless they sign a form saying they are willing to go home '*voluntarily*'. If a family becomes destitute then they can lose their children because local authorities have a legal duty under the Children Act to support dependants aged

under 18 but not their parents. For further information, see: [www.refugee-action.org.uk/campaigns/families.aspx](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/campaigns/families.aspx).

### Awareness training days on mental health and domestic violence

GLDVP's Mental Health Project will be offering basic awareness training days on mental health and domestic violence from June 2006. These are aimed at those agencies (both statutory and voluntary) who already work in either the mental health or domestic violence sector and would like support in developing a more holistic service.

- Basic Mental Health Awareness Training for Domestic Violence Workers: Monday 26 June, Friday 29 September, Monday 13 November.
- Basic Domestic Violence Awareness Training for Mental Health Workers: Wednesday 26 July, Monday 30 October, Thursday 7 December.

Each training cost £75 (voluntary), £100 (statutory) (including a copy of the GLDVP Domestic Violence and Mental Health Handbook). Please contact Rachel Carter, Development Co-ordinator, Greater London Domestic Violence Project on 020 7785 3860 or email at: [Rachel.carter@gldvp.org.uk](mailto:Rachel.carter@gldvp.org.uk) with any queries.

### **AI Women's Action Network series of events**

Amnesty International's Women's Action Network is holding a series of events at their Human Rights Centre in East London. Forthcoming events include: Celebrated documentary film-maker Kim Longinotto's *'Divorce Iranian Style'*, on Wednesday 24 May, 6.30pm, and the first in the new *'Behind the Screen'* series of human rights-related films. (Admission £5 - donation to Amnesty's Peace Garden Project).

Talk by Shirin Ebadi on Wednesday 31 May, 7 pm: This free event is a rare opportunity to hear inspirational human rights campaigner Shirin Ebadi - the first Muslim woman, and the first Iranian, to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She has defended the rights of political dissenters, writers, and intellectuals at risk of arrest, torture and execution in Iran and has dared to speak out on issues such as women's rights and equality, religious freedom and freedom of expression.

The Bogus Woman, theatre production on Saturday 24 June, 7.30 pm. The Mama Quillo Company, in association with the Women's Action Network, presents the Haymarket Leicester production of Kay Adshead's play *The Bogus Woman*. This one-woman play focuses on the experiences of a female journalist from an unspecified African country whose family is all killed. She herself manages to escape and seeks asylum in the UK, but her story is not believed and she is sent back to her death. The play's author has been working with the women detainees at

Yarl's Wood Detention Centre, and a speaker from Women Against Rape, which organises self-help sessions for these women, will be there with Kay herself for the q & a session after the performance. Admission by £5 donation.

For more information on all events and booking, visit online Amnesty International UK's website at: [www.amnesty.org.uk/action/events](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/action/events).

### **Musical events over summer**

Music for Change is an organisation which aims to promote cultural diversity and respect through musical events and workshops with young people. They are holding a series of inspiring performances in the South East over the summer featuring musicians from Bulgaria, Kyrgystan, Jamaica, India and Ghana and many more. For more details see their website at [www.musicforchange.org](http://www.musicforchange.org) or contact them on (01227) 459243.

### **Conference: Twenty-first century slavery: issues and responses**

This conference on 23-24 November 2006 organised by the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE), at the University of Hull, UK, aims to further the debate on the many forms of slavery still current today including trafficking in children and women, often into sexual exploitation but also for purposes of exploited labour of other forms; forced migration of various kinds; bonded labour; work

undertaken in conditions extremely detrimental to the health and safety of workers; slavery of one ethnic group by another; child labour and debt bondage.

Planned workshops currently include 'human trafficking in Rumania,' 'free trade zones in Sri Lanka,' 'women: slavery or empowerment, Migrant prostitutes in Italy: trafficking in women – discourse and reality,' and 'modern slavery in the Netherlands,' among many others. For more information contact Professor Gary Craig, 2006 Conference, Wilberforce Institute, Oriel Chambers, 27 High Street, Hull, HU1 9E5 or email: [G.Craig@hull.ac.uk](mailto:G.Craig@hull.ac.uk). See also: [www.hull.ac.uk/cass/events/](http://www.hull.ac.uk/cass/events/).

### Why women? campaign website!

The why women? campaign is speaking up for women's organisations, who do great work for women and society as a whole, but are under threat from lack of funding. See: [www.whywomen.org.uk/](http://www.whywomen.org.uk/).

### RISE

#### Investing in Refugees

If you're a refugee or have successfully been granted asylum, and have an idea that will benefit your community, RISE can help get your project off the ground! Refugees based in the UK are welcome to apply for money to transform their ideas into projects. RISE will be giving awards of between £500 and £5,000 to help individuals and small groups of refugees turn their ideas into reality. For further details contact: Alex MacLeod at [alexmacleod@unltd.org.uk](mailto:alexmacleod@unltd.org.uk) or Tel: 020 7566 1101. For more information: [www.unltd.org.uk](http://www.unltd.org.uk).

### Hydro active 5km women's challenge

Sign up today and help women from around the world find safety from human rights abuses abroad. Events are organised in Liverpool, London or Birmingham on SUNDAY 3 September. It is a fun day out, running or walking, so why not get a group of friends together. All money you raise will go toward Asylum Aid's Refugee Women's Resource Project. Please find all information on the back of this newsletter, page 24.

## International news

### Netherlands: Parliament intervenes to prevent deportation of LGBT Iranians

Dutch members of parliament successfully pressured Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk not to deport lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) asylum seekers back to Iran. Citing Human Rights Watch's work MPs illustrated that LGBT Iranians faced threats of torture, ill-treatment and even execution if returned.

In February 2006 Minister Verdonk lifted a ban on deporting LGBT (and religious converts) to Iran, maintaining that they could avoid persecution by hiding their sexual orientation and religious beliefs. Human Rights Watch denounced this position, focusing media attention on the consequences of this policy. Opposition in parliament prompted Minister Verdonk to extend the moratorium on expulsions



until a new Dutch Ministry assessment of the situation is completed.<sup>3</sup>

### **Iraq: Conflict masks true number of women and girls being trafficked into sex slavery**

The Organisation for Women's Freedom in Iraq estimates that at least 2,000 women who have gone missing in Iraq since the fall of Saddam in 2003 are thought to have been forced into sex slavery. The figure is based on anecdotal evidence as conflict within Iraq prevents further assessment.

Time magazine reports that *'the collapse of law and order and the absence of a stable government have allowed criminal gangs, alongside terrorists, to run amuck.'* A western official responsible for monitoring the status of women in Iraq says that the figure may be inflated but admits that sex trafficking has become a serious issue.

The US State Department's 2005 trafficking report on Iraq states that the problem in Iraq is *'difficult to appropriately gauge'*, but cites an unknown number of girls who have been trafficked into Yemen, Jordan, Syria and the Persian Gulf for sexual exploitation. Tradition further masks the true number, families consider that their daughters' kidnapping brings shame and so don't report her missing. Stigma associated with rape may mean that even if the girl did resurface, she might not be accepted back into the family.

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Netherlands: Persecuted Iranians Granted Asylum,' May 2006, [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org).

At the Khadamiyah Women's Prison, Times journalists met with an 18 year old woman who had been kidnapped by an armed gang from an orphanage just after the US invasion. She was sent to brothels in Samarra, al-Qaim on the border with Syria, and Mosul in the north before she was taken back to Baghdad where she was drugged with pills and forced to wear a suicide belt, she was ordered to bomb a clerics office in Khadamiyah, but turned herself in to police. A judge later sentenced her to 7 years, *'for her sake'*, to protect her from the gang.

Two other Iraqi girls escaped their captors in the United Arab Emirates, reporting them to the police in Dubai, the girls were sent back to Iraq where they were imprisoned for having fake passports.

Women's advocates are trying to set up refuges for victims who need protection from the gangs and their families who may try to kill the girls to restore their families' honour. The Iraqi government has introduced measures which mean that women's organisations wanting to establish a shelter must get permission from four separate ministries and the Baghdad city council for every shelter they wish to operate, even if they are not funded by government money.<sup>4</sup> Aid workers have accused bureaucrats in ministries of having *'paralysed'* with red tape or frozen the assets of charitable organisations who might have been able

<sup>4</sup> Time Magazine, 'Stolen Away. As criminal gangs run amuck in Iraq, hundreds of girls have gone missing. Are they being sold for sex?', 1 May 2006, [www.time.com/time/archive/preview/0,10987,1186558,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/0,10987,1186558,00.html).

to offer assistance to women and girls, as a result trafficking goes unchecked.

### related news

#### **Vietnam: 6,000 women and children estimated to have been trafficked abroad in 2005**

The Ho Chi Minh City Children Sponsoring Association in Vietnam estimates that 6,000 women and children were trafficked abroad in 2005, for forced labour, sex slavery, adoption and forced marriage. Many victims were trafficked to Cambodia, some of whom were later sent on to Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

The Vietnamese government has adopted four main projects to tackle trafficking in the period 2005 – 2010 focusing on educating communities against the trafficking of women and children, increasing efforts in the fight against human trafficking, building up legal documents on the issue and giving stronger support to victims.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Canada: New measures to assist Victims of Human Trafficking**

Earlier this month Canadian Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Monte Solberg, announced that the federal government had adopted new measures

that will help victims of human trafficking in Canada.<sup>6</sup>

From now on, immigration officers will issue temporary resident permits for up to 120 days to victims of human trafficking providing them with a recovery period and eligibility for health-care benefits under the Interim Federal Health program. The new measures have been carefully designed to benefit bona fide victims of human trafficking only.

Minister Solberg said that the measures will support Canada's efforts to combat trafficking as Canada will not '*stand by idly and allow criminals to profit from victims of human trafficking.*' He also said it was the '*compassionate thing*' to do. Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act includes penalties of up to life imprisonment and fines of up to one million dollars for conviction for trafficking in persons.

**related information** Background information on trafficking issues prepared by the Canadian Council for Refugees in 2004 is available at: [www.web.ca/ccr/traffbackgrounder.html](http://www.web.ca/ccr/traffbackgrounder.html). See also: [www.trafficking.ca](http://www.trafficking.ca).

#### **Iran: Police in Tehran ordered to arrest women wearing un-Islamic dress**

The Guardian reports that from the 20 April 2006, police in Tehran have been ordered to arrest women who are not adhering to the regime's definition of

<sup>5</sup> People's Daily Online, '6,000 Vietnamese women, children trafficked abroad in 2005,' 8 March 2006 [http://english.people.com.cn/200603/08/eng20060308\\_248806.html](http://english.people.com.cn/200603/08/eng20060308_248806.html).

<sup>6</sup> Source: Article circulated by the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR).

Islamic dress codes; offences include loose fitting hijab, head scarves, tight fitting jackets and shortened trousers exposing skin. Offenders could be fined £30 or two months in jail.

Taxi drivers will be held accountable for their passengers dress, police will be given powers to impound cabs found to be carrying women who are inappropriately dressed. Companies found guilty of repeat offences will be closed. There have been reports that women motorists have been stopped as their hijab has been deemed inappropriate. Fashion stores have also been raided by police and brightly coloured manteaus (tight fitting jackets) seized.

Tehran's police chief has accused non-conforming women of making 'the social environment insecure'.<sup>7</sup>

### **Pakistan: Couples married through choice fleeing honour crimes**

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) reports on the risks faced by couples from different tribal backgrounds marrying through choice. In traditional Pakistani society marriages outside one's clan are considered unacceptable, especially in rural areas.<sup>8</sup>

According to IRIN, HRCP know of at least two couples currently on the run from

<sup>7</sup> The Guardian, *Police in Tehran ordered to arrest women in 'un-Islamic' dress*, 20 April 2006, [www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1757002,0\\_0.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1757002,0_0.html).

<sup>8</sup> IRIN News, 'PAKISTAN: Couples marrying by choice face many dangers,' 10 May 2006, online at: [www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=53263&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=PAKISTAN](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=53263&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=PAKISTAN).

their families fearing they will be killed by their families. The families of a couple from the Ghotki district of the Sindh province are threatening to kill the bride who is ethnically Pathan and the groom who is ethnically Baloch. There are fears of clashes between Pathan and Baloch clans over the issue.

Another couple, Bushra Hafiz and Muhammad Irfan, from the Rahimyar Khan area of the southern Punjab province are in hiding, fearing they will be killed by the bride's family and the extended clan to which she belongs. The pair have appealed to the media to help save their lives by highlighting their plight.

HRCP finds the threat disturbing, given the fact that a Supreme Court ruling in 2003 found that an adult Muslim woman was free to marry anyone she wanted and did not need the consent of a wali (guardian). However in reality those who defy parental will in matters of marriage face acute problems, highlighting the fact that even when new laws are made social attitudes may dictate different outcomes in practice.

One married couple was recently released after five years in jail, having been arrested on charges of adultery and jailed in separate prisons after the bride's father accused her husband of abducting her. Most commonly couples are jailed as a result of family members who oppose their marriage accusing the husband of kidnapping their daughter or accusing the couple of being in an adulterous relationship. Both women and men have been killed in honour crimes when marrying without parental consent.

Saira Ansari, coordinator of the women and children's desk at HRCP explains,

*'It's a complex situation. The law permits adult Muslim women to marry as they choose, but often male relatives absolutely refuse to accept this right, perceiving it as a matter of family "honour" and either forcibly marry off the woman to a man of their choice or intimidate, threaten or even murder the woman and sometimes the person she has chosen as her partner.'*

Couples have been pursued across the country by angry relatives. In 2003 Shaista Almani, who married Balkh Sher Mahar, a man from a rival clan, was relentlessly pursued for months across Pakistan and narrowly escaped death after being declared a 'Kari' (black woman) by Almani tribesmen. She was forcibly separated from her husband and forced back to her village. Only after human rights groups intervened was she given police protection. The couple fled the country in 2004 when a court validated their marriage and permitted them to live together.

Another couple from Sindh were not so fortunate. They were lured back from the city port of Karachi, tortured and shot dead by a tribal jirga in 2003.

### **Mexico: 23 Women allege sex abuse by Mexican Police**

The Mexican National Human Rights Commission has filed criminal complaints with prosecutors on behalf of 23 women who claim they were raped or sexually abused by police following a violent

protest.<sup>9</sup> Seven women reported that they were raped and 16 others, including three foreign nationals, reported being sexually abused by police who detained them after violent clashes in the town of San Salvador Atenco. Local, state and federal police officers are amongst those accused. The Associate Press reports that Mexico State Police Chief Wilfrido Robledo denied the allegations in comments to local media, denouncing them as part of the detainee's strategy to make the police look bad.

The women who lodged the charges were among more than 200 taken into custody in San Salvador Atenco, where members of a radical group had previously kidnapped and beaten six policemen after they tried to prevent flower vendors from setting up stands in a nearby city.

### **Zimbabwe: Woman tortured for campaigning for women's needs**

The Sunday Times reported on the plight of Thabitha Khumalo's, general secretary of the Women's Advisory Council of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, who has been arrested countless times and tortured in her country, Zimbabwe, for the crime of campaigning against a critical shortage of tampons and sanitary towels since the country was hit by an economic crisis in the wake of Mugabe's abusive and repressive policies.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Associated Press, 'Women allege sex abuse by Mexican Police', 9 May 2006, online at: [www.truthout.org/issues\\_06/051106WA.shtml](http://www.truthout.org/issues_06/051106WA.shtml).

<sup>10</sup> Christina Lamb, 'Celebrities back tampon rebels of Zimbabwe', *The Sunday Times*, May 07, 2006, online at: [www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-2168451,00.html](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-2168451,00.html).

Healthcare manufacturer Johnson & Johnson pulled out of the country in 1999 because of the worsening economic situation. Tampons and sanitary towels had to be imported from South Africa but the highest inflation in the world combined with the collapse of the currency means that these items cost as much as half the average minimum wage. It is out of reach for the great majority of women who are forced to resort to unhygienic practices which, according to Khumalo could be life threatening: vaginal infections have increased in the country and treatment is either unavailable or unaffordable, which means women are more vulnerable to Sexually Transmitted Diseases including HIV. Khumalo fears that life expectancy for women, already the lowest in the world at 34 years, could be lowered to 20 as a result.

The issue was raised by an MP in parliament, but government ministers '*fell about laughing and dismissed the matter.*' Khumalo's attempts to highlight the problem through public meetings and distribution of scarves printed with demands for affordable sanitary wear, resulted in her being arrested and repeatedly beaten.

Khumalo's campaign is now being supported in Britain by a number of celebrities who will launch a fundraising campaign '*Dignity. Period!*' at the end of May, starting with a night of entertainment at the 20th Century theatre in Notting Hill, west London, hosted by Stephen Fry. The aim of the campaign is to raise funds so that Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) can purchase sanitary products in South

Africa and transport them into Zimbabwe with the support of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. For more information on the campaign or how to donate, see [www.actsa.org](http://www.actsa.org), click on 'Dignity.Period' in Update section.

### International actions & events

#### **Sudan: Appeal for an end to violence against women**

The civil society of Cameroon especially all human rights and women's human rights activists, particularly, the Cameroonian Association of Female Jurists (CAFEJ), the African Indigenous Women's Organisation, Human Rights Watch Cameroon, and the Association for the Fight Against Violence on Women are appealing in line with Sudan's Organisation Against Torture (SOAT) and SOAT's network of lawyers in Nyala for the respect of human rights and women's human rights in the Darfur region of Sudan, and have launched an appeal in response to continued reports of violence against women including rape and torture. For more information see: [www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd\[157\]=x-157-534113](http://www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd[157]=x-157-534113).

#### **2006 Day of action for women's health against women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS**

The Women's Access to Health Campaign (WAHC) is a campaign promoting women's health worldwide. It was launched on May 28, 2003, by Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights

in collaboration with the Peoples Health Movement (PHM). Over 400 organisations and individuals are currently signed up in support of WAHC. The focus of WAHC's call for action in 2006 is women's health and HIV/AIDS, details of which can be found at [www.wgnrr.nl/pdf/cfa2006eng.pdf](http://www.wgnrr.nl/pdf/cfa2006eng.pdf).

If you want to support the campaign or receive further information about the WAHC and the Call for Action 2006, contact WGNRR at: [office@wgnrr.org](mailto:office@wgnrr.org), phone: +31-(0)20-620 96 72, or fax: +31-(0)20- 620 24 50.

### **Call to help destitute Colombian refugee women and children in Ecuador**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) needs \$69,000 by 31 May 2006 to provide assistance to 7,200 refugees, especially women and children who have escaped the escalating violence in Colombia and are now living in Ecuador with nothing. The UN Refugee Agency has a program to give them immediate assistance and help them get back on their feet. Visit [www.unhcr.ca/colombia](http://www.unhcr.ca/colombia) for more information on how you can make a difference in the lives of these victims. All online donations received during the month of May will be put towards the work in the region.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Information circulated by the Canadian Council for Refugees network. Original source: UNHCR Canada, at [info@news.unhcr.ca](mailto:info@news.unhcr.ca).

### **Update on campaign to save Leyla Mafi from execution**

Leyla Mafi was saved from the death penalty after the intervention of human rights activists worldwide.<sup>12</sup> The 20-year old Iranian, originally sentenced to death, is reported to have had her sentence of 99 lashes inflicted and to have been moved to a women's rehabilitation centre, where she has to stay for eight months.

At the age of eight, Leyla Mafi was forced into prostitution by her mother and raped repeatedly thereafter. She was arrested in 2004 and despite the fact that tests carried out by social workers reportedly showed that she had a mental age of eight, she was sentenced to flogging followed by death. In an exceptional move, the Iranian government publicly commented on the case at a news conference following the intervention of Amnesty International's members and other activists. The authorities contested Amnesty International's information about the case, but announced that Leyla Mafi's case would be reviewed.

### **World Refugee Day**

is on 20 June and UNHCR encourages you to visit the World Refugee Day website to learn about events and ways in which you can participate in this internationally recognized day. This year, they are celebrating the unwavering hope of refugees who flee from violence and persecution seeking safety and a

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International, 'Iran: Further information on fear of imminent execution/fear of flogging Leyla Mafi (f),' 20 April 2006, online at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE130362006?open&of=ENG-2D4>.

better life in another country. In the face of death, sadness, and loss of their home, it is often only HOPE that keeps refugees going. The UN Refugee Agency celebrates the courage and determination of more than 19 million people of concern. Visit the World Refugee Day website for more information at: [www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/events?id=3e7f46e04](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/events?id=3e7f46e04).

### related information

UNHCR is now accepting orders for World Refugee Day promotional materials (a single poster and a leaflet featuring this year's theme Hope). These materials can also be found on UNHCR's website by clicking on the following link: [www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/events?id=3e7f46e04](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/events?id=3e7f46e04).

Priority will be given to the agencies organizing events. Send your orders to [nyembwe@unhcr.org](mailto:nyembwe@unhcr.org) with information indicating the kind of event you are organizing and the number of people you are expecting at your event. The deadline for receiving orders is 5 June 2005.

Also, every year, UNITED co-ordinates an online list of activities and distributes free campaigning material (posters, stickers, postcards and information leaflets). If your organisation is hosting, organising or supporting an activity related to the International Refugee Day, you can post details at [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Source: EJNews

[www.exiledjournalists.net/index.php?module=announce&ANN\\_id=61&ANN\\_user\\_op=view](http://www.exiledjournalists.net/index.php?module=announce&ANN_id=61&ANN_user_op=view).

### new publications

### international

#### Violence Against Women in the Family in Albania

Thousands of women in Albania are at risk of violence from their husbands or their intimate partners. On March 30, 2006, Amnesty International released a report, *Albania: Violence against Women in the Family: 'It's not her shame,'* addressing this pressing issue. In this report, Amnesty International identifies the barriers which prevent women in gaining access to justice, including the justification of violence as part of Albanian 'tradition'; the failure of law enforcement officers to respond appropriately to women seeking assistance, and the failure of the legal system to recognize violence against women in the family as a criminal offence. Amnesty International calls for women who have suffered violence to be able to enforce their rights to protection, reparation and redress.

#### Syria: High profile study on violence against women published by authorities

The study, released in April by the state-run General Union of Women and funded by United Nations Development Fund for Women, found that married women in Syria are most likely to get abused.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Story circulated by Women Living Under Muslim Laws. Original Source: Reuters, 'Syria: Syria breaks taboo on violence against women', 11 April 2006. Online at: [www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd\[157\]=x-157-532154](http://www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd[157]=x-157-532154).

Less than one percent of surveyed women said they had been subjected to abuse from a stranger. A quarter of married women get beaten, usually by a male relative. Over 70 percent of abusers are husbands, fathers or brothers. Reasons provided for the violence range from *'neglecting house work to bombarding husbands with too many questions'* according to the study.

According to Reuters, the news agency, Syrian member of parliament Souad Bukour declared: *'Even though a man would go to prison if his female relative reported him for assault, it is very rare in our society ... because that would bring shame onto the family.'* Whilst some significant progress have been made in education and public life - women hold 12 percent of Syria's parliamentary seats, one of the highest rate in the Arab world, Bukour said more needed to be done to improve the status of women. Men who murder female relatives suspected of having sex outside marriage in *'honor killings'* face lenient sentences in contrast to other murderers who might get the death penalty or a life sentence. Honor killings account for half of all murders in the country, with an estimated 200 or 300 such crimes, mostly amongst rural or nomadic communities.

The release of the study coincides with calls for a campaign to raise awareness of the problem. Bukour, who is also the president of the General Union of Women, said activists hope their campaign will be supported by the media and religious leaders.

### *From Camp to Community: Liberia study on exploitation of children*

In this new study (May 2006) conducted in Liberia, the non-governmental organisation Save the Children UK (SCF-UK) exposes the widespread exploitation of children by humanitarian workers, peacekeepers and local businessmen.<sup>15</sup> According to SCF-UK, the study was carried out in temporary camps for those displaced by the civil war and amongst those recently repatriated to their towns and villages of origin after the end of the war.

It found that *'vulnerable children are still exchanging sex for basic necessities such as money to attend school or food to feed their families. During the study in Liberia, children and members of the community consistently reported that a high proportion of girls in their camps were being sexually exploited by adults in positions of power. They reported that adults providing humanitarian assistance, peacekeepers and wealthy individuals regularly buy under-age sex.'*

The full report can be found online at: [www.savethechildren.org/publications/liberia-exploitation-v4.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/liberia-exploitation-v4.pdf). Also: A collective of international NGOs, including SCF, launched a new set of materials called *'Keeping Children Safe'* in March 2006 to help NGOs to attain high standards of child protection.

### related new publication

<sup>15</sup> SCF-UK, 'Children in Liberia Victims of Sexual Exploitation, Study Finds', London, 8 May 2006, at [www.savethechildren.org/news/releases/release\\_050806.asp](http://www.savethechildren.org/news/releases/release_050806.asp).



### East Africa: Widespread abuse of girls

A report released to coincide with a two-day conference on violence against girls in Africa reveals that nine out of 10 girls in eastern Africa have suffered physical or psychological abuse, including rape at the hands of relatives.<sup>16</sup> A pan-African advocacy group interviewed 1,500 women aged between 18 and 24 in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia. Each of them was asked to testify about abuses that might have happened during their childhoods.

### India: Study shows trafficking on rise in North East

A study across eight states in the North East, India, a region ravaged by conflict, highlights the rising tide of human trafficking - mostly women and girls - and its impact on the spread of HIV/AIDS.<sup>17</sup> According to the Nedan Foundation, an Indian NGO working in the region, which carried out the seven-month study sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), traffickers are targeting people affected by conflict and poverty who are living in internally displaced camps:

*'We visited 25 relief camps of internally displaced persons [IDPs] in Kokrajhar in Bodoland Territorial Council, Assam [state]. Nearly 200,000 people are living in these camps without proper food.*

<sup>16</sup> Source: IRIN, 'East Africa: Abuse of girls widespread - report', Addis Ababa, 12 May 2006, online at: [www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=53306](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=53306).

<sup>17</sup> Source: Integrated Regional Information Network, 'INDIA: Human trafficking in the northeast fuelling HIV/AIDS - report', KOKRAJHAR, 17 May 2006, at [www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=53386&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=INDIA](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=53386&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=INDIA).

*Traffickers carry out recruitment drives in such relief camps. They make false promises of jobs as domestic help in big cities.'*

Interviews were conducted with 60 teenage sex workers at Dimapur, a border town in the North Eastern state of Nagaland. They revealed that many of the girls had been trafficked from the Naga countryside with false promises of sales jobs in big cities. Most had lost one or both parents in the region's protracted ethnic conflicts and almost all had dropped out of school with little prospects for the future.

The conflict in the region, which hosts 200 of the 430 tribal groups living in India, was sparked by an influx of migrants over the past few decades in the form of disputes over land, leading to demands for secession and political autonomy. Blood feuds are common. In the last few decades, violence has ravaged the states of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh. Assam, Manipur and Tripura have also witnessed massive displacement.

Digambar Narzary, head of the Nedan Foundation said that more than 100 young women had gone missing from the camps over the past two years. There are fears that they may have been sold into sexual slavery or 'temporarily married' which is often a euphemism for prostitution, IRIN reports. There are also fears that many may be infected with HIV/AIDS or at increased risk of infection.

More than 5 million people were living with HIV in the Indian adult population in

2004, accounting for 13 percent of global HIV prevalence. The country holds the second largest absolute number of HIV infections in the world according to UNAIDS, 86 percent of which are through sexual transmission.

### **Combating Human Trafficking: Overview of UNHCR anti-trafficking activities in Europe**

This overview published by UNHCR (2005) provides regional and country specific data on statistics and trends, national legal frameworks and implementation arrangements for 33 countries. Also included in this report are changes to emerging case law and UNHCR's capacity and national mechanisms to address trafficking-related asylum claims.

It is hoped that the overview will contribute to the identification and sharing of best practices and serve as a basis for the future implementation and training on UNHCR's guidelines on the application of Art 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, in cases of human trafficking.

The report can also serve as a tool to deepen regional and in-country cooperation with partners such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on Human Trafficking in Persons, especially in Women and Children, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Children's fund (UNICEF), the Council of

Europe (CoE) and international and local NGOs. The overview aims to assist UNHCR country offices to situate themselves on the map of counter-trafficking activities in Europe, and exchange information between UNHCR field offices on best practice in the areas of legislative development, victim identification, referral systems, refugee status determination, training and durable solutions.

### **Ensuring Gender Sensitivity in the Context of Refugee Status Determination – Procedural issues**

This training package published by UNHCR at the end of 2005 is aimed at anyone involved in the Refugee Status Determination process and women issues, NGOs, lawyers, etc. It provides training participants with an overview of the most relevant procedural aspects which should be considered in order to ensure gender-sensitive asylum procedures and to advise them upon procedural measures to take in gender-related asylum claims.

Hard copies can be requested by sending an email containing your name, mailing address and the number of copies requested to [YIP@unhcr.org](mailto:YIP@unhcr.org).

**related new publication** Almost every country in the world is affected by human trafficking according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which has compiled the first such study from open sources. According to *Trafficking in Persons, Global Patterns* (April 2006) there are 127 countries of origin, mainly developing countries, and 137 destination countries,

mainly in the industrialised world. The report also highlights 98 transit countries. Full report online at: [www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons\\_report\\_2006-04.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006-04.pdf).

### The State of the World's Mothers 2006 report

'A Mother's Day Report Card: The Best—And Worst—Countries to Be a Mother' are presented in this report available online at: [www.savethechildren.org/publications/SOWM\\_2006\\_final.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/SOWM_2006_final.pdf).

### new publications

UK

### Accessing Early Years in London: Refugee Women's Experiences

In 2005, as part of the Refugee Women's Empowerment Project funded by Equal and the European Social Fund, the Refugee Women's Association initiated a research project to investigate the experiences of refugee women in accessing early years provisions for their children in London.<sup>18</sup> The research surveyed 147 refugee mothers who have come to the UK as refugees from 27 different countries worldwide, and now live in 19 different boroughs of Greater London.

Almost one fifth (18%) of the refugee women involved in the survey had no access to any sort of childcare provision.

<sup>18</sup> Source: Information sent by Bill Bolloten on [refed@yahogroups.com](mailto:refed@yahogroups.com).

Of those that did use some form of childcare, almost a quarter (23%) indicated using childcare 'other' than that offered by official providers, such as relying on friends and family. The research identified the lack of information about early years provision as one of the major barriers for refugee women in accessing services on an equal basis. For a copy of the report, please contact Refugee Women's Association on Tel: 020 7923 2412, Fax: 020 7923 3929 or email: [info@refugeewomen.org](mailto:info@refugeewomen.org).

### *From deterrence to criminalisation*

This month the Institute of Race Relations published a major review of developments in European asylum law from 2002-2005 written by Frances Webber: '*Asylum: from deterrence to criminalisation*' draws attention to the threat posed to international conventions by the adoption of a penal framework to prevent the arrival of would-be refugees in Europe and to aid the departure of failed asylum seekers.

The review, which covers over one hundred cases, examines a number of prosecutions brought against individuals who, through their humanitarianism, have sought to assist asylum seekers or undocumented migrants. Human rights activists, lawyers and religious leaders are among those who have been prosecuted for such innocuous and unthreatening activities as housing the destitute, exposing degrading conditions in detention centres, or advising those under threat of deportation of their legal and civil rights.

The document constitutes issue No. 55 of the IRR European Race Bulletin,

published four times a year. It is available from the Institute of Race Relations, 2-6 Leake Street, Kings Cross Road, London WC1X 9HS. Telephone +00 44 (0)20 7837 0041. 19pp. Price £7.

### **Immigration, Nationality & Refugee Law Handbook 2006**

[www.jcwi.org.uk/publications/jcwipublications.html](http://www.jcwi.org.uk/publications/jcwipublications.html).

#### new resources

#### international

### **Lesbian, gay and HIV - revised manual on winning asylum**

Immigration Equality and the Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center have recently published their revised Manual on Winning Asylum, Withholding and Convention Against Torture Cases Based on Sexual Orientation, Transgender Identity and/or HIV Positive Status. Immigration Equality is a US organisation advocating for equality under the immigration law for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, (LGBT), and HIV-positive individuals.

It runs a pro bono asylum project to assist LGBT and HIV-positive asylum seekers to find free or low-cost legal representation. Immigration Equality also maintains a list of LGBT/HIV-friendly private immigration attorneys to provide legal representation for those who contact them. It also provides technical assistance to attorneys who are working on sexual orientation, transgender

identity, or HIV status-based asylum applications, or other immigration applications where the client's LGBT or HIV-positive identity is at issue in the case. Immigration Equality also advocates for change to US immigration laws which discriminate against LGBT and HIV-positive individuals and their loved ones.

The Manual is available for free online at [www.immigrationequality.org](http://www.immigrationequality.org). Contact details: Victoria Neilson, Legal Director, Immigration Equality, Tel: + (212) 714-2904 (ext. 25) or email:

[vneilson@immigrationequality.org](mailto:vneilson@immigrationequality.org).

### **Forthcoming (2006): Documenting Women's Rights Violations by Non-state Actors**

This manual, by Jan Bauer and Anissa Hélie (April 2006), specifically addressed to groups and individuals not well versed in legal matters, provides tools for human rights activists and defenders who investigate violence perpetrated against women by non-state actors. Its goal is to offer guidance with regard to the legal definitions and human rights protection mechanisms that may help them compel States to fulfil their obligation to protect. It presents concrete examples of particular forms of violence committed against women by non-state actors and models of strategies that have been used effectively, particularly in Muslim communities.

The manual is the result of a collaboration between Rights & Democracy (R&D) and Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), and aims

to be a tool to fight against impunity of violence against women. See more at: [www.wluml.org/english/pubsfulltxt.shtml?cmd\[87\]=i-87-532328](http://www.wluml.org/english/pubsfulltxt.shtml?cmd[87]=i-87-532328).

### Related publication

Women Living Under Muslim Laws published a **Dossier (no. 27)** in December 2005 on the codification of Muslim personal laws (MPL) in minority contexts, from Benin to the Philippines, and from South Africa to Canada. The full text which is currently being translated into Arabic and French can be found at:

[www.wluml.org/english/pubsfulltxt.shtml?cmd\[87\]=i-87-530615](http://www.wluml.org/english/pubsfulltxt.shtml?cmd[87]=i-87-530615)

### Related publication

The latest issue of **Forced Migration Review** (no. 25) includes a major feature on '*People trafficking: upholding rights and understanding vulnerabilities*' consisting of 22 articles. In addition other features include articles on return and reintegration in Sudan, the ongoing conflict in Darfur, the UN's '*cluster*' approach, '*environmental*' refugees, HIV/AIDS and local integration. The May issue is now available online at [www.fmreview.org/mags1.htm](http://www.fmreview.org/mags1.htm). Hard copies of the English edition will be available in late May. Arabic, French and Spanish editions will follow. To request a hard copy, please email the Editors at [fmr@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:fmr@qeh.ox.ac.uk).

## Manual on gender and human rights

*Between their stories and our realities*, a manual developed for seminars and workshops on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is an integral part of the Dramatic Video Series '*Women hold up the sky*,' eight short films on CEDAW's articles for women, men, youth and children to commemorate the 20th anniversary of CEDAW. The training manual seeks to introduce training in human rights from a gender perspective and to facilitate the dissemination of the Women's Convention throughout civil society. All the video series are available in English, French and Spanish. More information at:

[www.pdhre.org/cedaw/index.html](http://www.pdhre.org/cedaw/index.html).

## Human rights in three languages

Mandat International set up a new website at [www.whatconvention.org/](http://www.whatconvention.org/) which provides a trilingual international legal search engine with easy and quick access to human rights and humanitarian law. Over 250 international conventions are analysed. This new search database enables everybody, including those who do not have any legal background, to easily access the international rules binding a specific country, by choosing a country, a topic or a theme and a date. It aims to facilitate the work of jurists and organisations, promote knowledge of human rights and humanitarian laws, and contribute to enforcement and effectiveness of international norms.

## new resources

UK

### **Updated Navigation on Women Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

ICAR (Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK) has recently published an updated navigation guide on Women Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the UK. The guide has been newly updated to reflect current key issues relating to female asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. The guide, part of ICAR's information resources, aims to be an easily digestible and quickly accessible resource, comprising latest statistics, publications and projects. The guide covers women who have come to the UK claiming asylum in their own right, as well as those who have entered as dependants or through family reunion. Read it online at:

[www.icar.org.uk/?lid=6283](http://www.icar.org.uk/?lid=6283).

### **Scottish Refugee Research Network**

Scottish Refugee Council and UNHCR have launched a new research network which aims to support academics conducting Scottish based research into refugee and asylum issues. For more information click here (PDF) or contact the Research Intern at [researchnetwork@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:researchnetwork@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk).

### **Multi-lingual Leaflets on One Stop Services in Leeds and Birmingham**

The Refugee Council has produced leaflets explaining the services provided by their One Stop Services in Leeds and Birmingham. The leaflets, which inform asylum seekers about help with NASS (accommodation and subsistence), help

from voluntary sector agencies, and advice for under 18s and those suffering domestic violence or hate crimes, are available in 17 languages on the Refugee Council website at:

[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/publications/translations/service\\_desc.htm#leeds](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/publications/translations/service_desc.htm#leeds) and [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/publications/translations/service\\_desc.htm#birmingham](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/publications/translations/service_desc.htm#birmingham).

### ***Unheard voices - listening to the views of asylum seekers and refugees***

This new report and best practice guide on mental health services for asylum seekers and refugees, by consultants David Palmer and Kim Ward, builds on preliminary work conducted in 2005. It was commissioned by the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) on behalf of the network of 11 Mental Health Patient and Public Involvement Forums in London.

The recommendations and findings are based on the views of asylum seekers and refugees who were interviewed. Poverty, housing and immigration status have emerged as the key issues impacting on the mental health of asylum seekers and refugees. The report calls for agencies responsible for commissioning and providing care to take a much more integrated and holistic approach in the provision of such health care.

The best practice guide, which includes 100 recommendations, is being launched on 24 May at Portcullis House, Westminster supported by the

sponsorship of the All Party Parliamentary Group of MPs on Asylum Seekers and Refugees. For information telephone Louise Devine on 020 7788 4900 or email [louise.devine@cpih.org](mailto:louise.devine@cpih.org).

### notice board

#### **RWA's free job search training for refugee women**

Refugee Women's Association offers free job search training for qualified refugee women nurses, midwives and refugee women trained care assistants who are mothers and live in London. The two training sessions, which are supported by JobCentre, are from 13 June – 7 July 2006 and 7 June – 30 June 2006 respectively, 3 days a week, 9.45 – 2.15pm.

#### **Open Day & Course Registration:**

Training for nurses/midwives: Monday 5 June 2006, 11 am – 2pm at Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP.

Training for care assistants: Wednesday 31 May 2006, 11 am – 2pm, 3 days a week, 9.45 – 2.15pm, at the above address.

You will need to bring along documentation to demonstrate you are a mother and have obtained refugee status in the UK, as well as proof of Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance and an ID. Travel costs will be paid and, for a limited number, childcare expenses. To book call Monica on 020 7923 2412 or email:

[monicatucker@refugeewomen.org.uk](mailto:monicatucker@refugeewomen.org.uk)

#### **Student recruitment for Course on Counselling Refugees**

The Refugee Therapy Centre is recruiting students for its Introductory Course on Counselling Refugees 2006-07. The Refugee Therapy Centre is a charity run mostly by refugees for refugees which tries to offer own language therapeutic support to refugees and asylum seekers struggling to cope. The Introductory Course on Counselling Refugees offers students the opportunity to use their own experiences to help others. RTC is looking for refugees and asylum-seekers from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences and learn from each other, in working with refugees and asylum seekers.

The course will run on Friday afternoons from 1.30 -6.00pm, between October 2006 - July 2007. If you are interested or would like to know more about the course or the Refugee Therapy Centre, contact the course administrator via e-mail: [miriam@refugeetherapy.org.uk](mailto:miriam@refugeetherapy.org.uk) or telephone on 020 7272 2565. Also see online: [www.refugeetherapy.org.uk](http://www.refugeetherapy.org.uk). The deadline for applications for the 2006-2007 course is 15th June 2006.

Produced by RWRP (for more information on this issue, please contact Sophia Ceneda)  
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## HYDRO ACTIVE 5KM WOMEN'S CHALLENGE

Sign up today and help women from around the world find safety from human rights abuses abroad.

**LIVERPOOL, LONDON OR BIRMINGHAM – SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER**

It is a fun day out, running or walking, so why not get a group of friends together. All money you raise will go toward Asylum Aid's Refugee Women's Resource Project.

Places are limited, so please contact us today if you are interested!  
to find out more call Elizabeth Lechlein on phone 020 7377 5123, or email [elizabethl@asylumaid.org.uk](mailto:elizabethl@asylumaid.org.uk)

### Asylum Aid - STANDING ORDER FORM

We rely on the support of individuals to continue our vital work. Please complete and return the below form if you would like to support our work on a regular basis. Thank you!

To: The Manager, \_\_\_\_\_ Bank,  
(Address of Bank) \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay **ASYLUM AID** the sum of £\_\_\_\_\_ each  
month/quarter/year (delete as appropriate) until further notice

and debit my account no. \_\_\_\_\_

sort code: \_\_\_\_\_ starting on (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[FOR OFFICE USE] To: NatWest Bank plc, PO Box 3AW, 104  
Tottenham Court Rd, London W1A 3AW. Sort Code: 56-00-31,  
account no. 63401711

Please return to:  
Asylum Aid, FREEPOST LON18836, London, E1 6BR