

Women's Asylum News

Refugee Women's Resource Project

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The Women's Charter – a year on

A year ago Asylum Aid unofficially launched the Charter of rights of women seeking asylum. The Charter was developed by a number of specialist organisations and members of the refugee, women and human rights sectors. It is a framework of principles and suggestions for the UK Border Agency in their treatment of women asylum seekers, the end goal being to create a gender-sensitive culture within the organisation.

This past year the Charter has been endorsed by over 140 broad ranging organisations including; Amnesty International UK, Oxfam, and Liberty. Three official launches and workshops were held. Throughout the UK several publications have featured the Charter. Asylum Aid has met with the UK Border Agency three times to discuss the objectives and goals of the Charter, the last meeting's outcome can be read on the Charter update page. There is now an official logo for the Charter and it has its own page in Women's Asylum News.

The Westminster launch of the Charter was enormously successful with over 80 attendees engaging in a lively and interesting debate. Neil Gerrard MP chaired the meeting and Helen Bamber OBE, founder of the Helen Bamber Foundation addressed the attendees and gave a moving speech recounting the tales of women who had suffered persecution. Talking about the failures of the asylum system Helen Bamber illustrated why the Charter is so important to asylum seekers and those in the refugee and asylum seeker communities. Jonathan Ellis

from the Refugee Council also spoke; discussing the many gender specific issues which face female asylum seekers. He spoke about the value of consistent and coherent goals to work toward in seeking change in the system. The night ended with a spirited and engaging debate.

In March Oxfam Cymru, the Welsh Refugee Council and Displaced People in Action launched the Charter in the Welsh National Assembly. Over 80 individuals from a wide range of sectors including asylum seekers, representatives of the Welsh National Assembly and individuals who work in the refugee community attended the launch. Speakers included Mike Lewis, the Chief Executive of the Welsh Refugee Council and Alan Bull, the Poverty Programme Coordinator of Oxfam. The Welsh launch represents the direction the Charter was always intended to take as a set of unifying principles that organisations can view and advocate as their own.

The Charter has featured in a number of published articles, including the Law Gazette, Positively Women magazine, The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants Bulletin, Women's Asylum News, the Scottish Refugee Council Newsletter and the Violence Against Women Blog. These publications helped raise the profile of the Charter and brought in new endorsements. In another exciting moment the Charter was mentioned on Woman's Hour when Asylum Aid's Debora Singer was a guest on the programme in July 2008.

A series of workshops have been held for practitioners who have endorsed the Charter which yielded a practical action plan for getting the ideals of the Charter incorporated. The broad range of organisations which participated means that the plans are wide ranging and progressive. The action plan means that the work to get the UK Border Agency to integrate the objectives of the Charter into their asylum process can be pursued in a coherent and consistent fashion.

The past year has seen the Charter make great progress but the year ahead should prove to be just as exciting. The one year anniversary of the Parliamentary launch of the Charter will see the promotion of a new overarching set of demands, namely:

- Women asylum seekers are entitled to the equivalent minimum standards at all stages of the asylum determination system as women victims in the criminal justice system.
- Women asylum seekers in Immigration Removal Centres are entitled to the equivalent minimum standards as women in prisons in the UK.
- Women asylum seekers are entitled to the same minimum standards in terms of maternity benefits as British women.

In Spring 2010 we intend to produce an impact report to show what progress the UKBA has made on gender issues. We welcome everyone who is working on issues affecting female asylum seekers to keep each other informed through the Charter Google group. Specific areas of progress so far are the increased provision of childcare so that women do not have to give details of their asylum claim in front of their children and the plans to up-date the UKBA gender guidelines which includes reference to asylum applicants being asked their preference for a male or female interviewer and interpreter.

The number of endorsements for the Charter grows weekly and we are looking forward to celebrating the milestone of reaching 200 organisations. If your organisation has not yet endorsed the Charter please do so by emailing the organisation's name to charter@asylumaid.org.uk. Your support will further enhance the status of the Charter and

through this help promote the rights of women seeking asylum. And if your organisation has endorsed the Charter but has not yet joined the Google group now would be a great time to do that as the next year will prove to be eventful. Information on joining the Google group can be found on our website at www.asylumaid.org.uk

Sector Update

An Integrated Strategy on Violence Against Women.

In April 2009 the Government launched a consultation on an integrated strategy on violence against women entitled "Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls". In the consultation document, violence against women is defined as "Violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or that affects women disproportionately"¹ and this includes domestic violence, sexual violence, abuse and exploitation, trafficking, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and crimes committed in the name of honour. Both Asylum Aid and the Refugee Council used this as an opportunity to raise the need to include women asylum seekers in order to make such a strategy truly integrated. Asylum Aid gave three instances of where the government is involved in violence against women:

1. Direct abuse by the state – during detention and removal
Some women seeking asylum experience violence against them at the hands of officials working for the state (including officials contracted to undertake particular functions by the state). This occurs particularly during forced removals and also in immigration removal centres.
2. Failure to protect - the asylum determination system
The state fails to protect women asylum seekers from violence that they have experienced abroad and which has caused them to flee.
3. Failure to protect – vulnerability due to destitution
Asylum seeking women who become destitute because of government policies are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence on the streets in the UK. They are too scared to access protection from this through the police.

Refugee Council and Asylum Aid point out that the UK Border Agency (UKBA) has two policies relevant to violence against women. The first is the Asylum Instruction *on gender issues in the asylum claim*² and the other policy is Policy Bulletin 70 on meeting the needs of those affected by domestic violence in UKBA supported accommodation.³

In contrast the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have many policies for women who have experienced violence against women. In the consultation paper's list of key government achievements since 1997, 16 strategies, policies, action plans and good practice guidance are included in relation to violence against women in the criminal justice system. Asylum Aid argues that there is an urgent need for the asylum system to learn the lessons from the criminal justice system and undergo a similar cultural shift.

¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

² <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/asylumpolicyinstructions/>

³ <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/asylumsupportbulletins/accesstosupport/>

The Refugee Council “*believe[s] that the Government’s commitment to tackling violence against women can only be taken seriously if a clear signal is sent to refugee and asylum seeking women that their experiences of violence will be treated as seriously as those of other women.*” The response argues for women and girls to be allowed access to the kind of services and support mechanisms which will reduce their vulnerability to violence and help them in their recovery process. The Refugee Council makes 27 recommendations within 4 broad categories of:

- preventing violence against refugee women and reducing their fear of violence
- ensuring that the asylum determination system responds to the needs of women who have experienced violence
- ensuring that women survivors of violence can access the services they require
- ending the destitution of asylum seeking women whose claims are refused

Consultation document “Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls” can be found at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2009-vaw/vaw-consultation.pdf?view=Binary>

Asylum Aid’s response can be found at:

http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/data/files/publications/104/VAW_integrated_strategy_Asylum_Aid_response_2009.pdf.

The Refugee Council’s response can be found at:

http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/Resources/Refugee%20Council/downloads/policy_responses/RC%20response%20to%20VAWAG%20consultation%20May%2009.pdf

UK News:

Hunger strike at Yarl’s Wood

Twenty people have recently started a hunger strike at Yarl’s Wood Immigration and Removal Centre which houses women and families near Bedfordshire. People are protesting at the standard of medical care available. A detainee from Malawi said his nine year old daughter was referred to an orthodontist before they were held at Yarl’s Wood but has been denied further treatment since their arrival. He said: “*Medical attention is not given as a priority. We’ve got medical healthcare but we don’t get the right care that we need. If you fall ill after lunch you can’t see the nurse, even if it’s urgent, until the following day.*” The Home Office however report a 24 hour health centre is available at the site and has been praised by independent inspectors.

Detainees are also protesting at children being held at the centre. In April 2009 the Children’s Commissioner Sir Al Aynsley-Green called for an end of the detention of children before deportation. He criticised the process by which nearly 2000 children were locked up for administrative purposes for an unknown length of time.

A spokeswoman said: “*A small number of detainees at Yarl’s Wood have refused meals.... Some are accessing snacks through the night café and children are obtaining additional snacks in classrooms in the day. The situation is under control and we are discussing with detainees their concerns. Our centres have been praised by the independent monitors and*

our medical care is as good as on the NHS. There is 24 hour nursing care, doctor's call night and day and access to social workers and dentists."

Incidents of violence erupting when detainees were separated from each other have also been reported. It is not clear whether this is linked to the hunger strike.

For full article see:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8104550.stm

International News:

Nepal: Displaced women vulnerable

Ten years of civil war have resulted in thousands of people being destitute in Kathmandu. The Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reveals however that women suffer the most and are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and impoverishment. A recent IDMC report illustrates that many women in Nepal suffer discrimination but displaced women and women who have lost their husbands experience significant protection and health risks which exacerbate destitution.

The report outlines how many women and girls who fled fighting in rural areas and moved to urban centres arrived with little or no skills. This reduced the job opportunities for women and has left many women unemployed or in exploitative working environments and at risk of abuse. Menuka Thapa, director of Rakshan Nepal a local NGO states: *"the increasing indifference by the government is putting many women at high risk as they have no choice but to take up any job for their survival and to feed their children."* Thapa believes many women are being forced to work in massage parlours and other establishments where they are vulnerable to sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

Government officials' state progress has been made with internally displaced groups in Nepal. A national policy is being developed in line with UN guiding principles on internal displacement. NGO's however believe there is no evidence regarding government programmes on education, health and vocational training targeted at displaced women and children. Yuvraj Thapa, director of local NGO 'Conflict Victim and Disabled Society (CVDS)' stipulates *"the government has to immediately start employment skills programmes so that helpless displaced women can start a new life"*. The IDMC report illustrates how an investment in skills and training for IDP women is an urgent priority.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84550>

For a copy of the IDMC 'Sustainability of IDP returns undermined by lack of assistance' report see:

[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/3BCB29A3E6B71579C125746D002E819A/\\$file/Nepal+-June+2008.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/3BCB29A3E6B71579C125746D002E819A/$file/Nepal+-June+2008.pdf)

DRC: Rape cases soar

Civil and human rights groups in South Kivu, eastern DRC, report an increase in cases of rape and attacks against women. Venant Rugusha, a civil society coordinator states: *“as is usual, the FDLR [Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda] attack at night, they burn [houses]...and take women to the forest where they rape them”*.

NGO Caritas believe the attacks against women are interpreted by the local population as a warning by the rebels. Caritas report the recent brutality against women is reminiscent of 1998/1999 massacres in South Kivu, where women were targeted and some were buried alive.

Nestor Yombo, public information officer for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports at least 463 cases of rape have been recorded in the last three months. Yombo states: *“A three-year-old girl succumbed to injuries sustained from defilement, presumably by the FDLRAccording to her mother, the [girl's] sisters aged 12, 14 and 17 have also all been raped at least once by armed men.”*

The International Crisis Group stated: *“Despite unprecedented international condemnation of the sexual violence, impunity remained widespread. Civil society reports show that the national army and the police were both guilty of sexual violence, but unlike civilians, faced no risk of prosecution....In June 2008, 2,200 rape cases were registered in North Kivu. These numbers represent only a fraction of the victims of sexual violence – those able and willing to report or seek assistance”*. In addition, some FDLR deserters and Congolese militia called Rasta have also been responsible for a series of rapes and genital mutilation against Congolese women which analysts believe is linked to ethnic cleansing in pursuit of territorial domination.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84685>

Kenya: Domestic workers vulnerable to abuse and HIV/AIDS

Many domestic workers in Nairobi describe how they have been exploited and abused by the families they were working for. This article outlines the circumstances of one woman who was hired as a domestic housekeeper. She describes how the person she worked for *“would force me to have sex with him; every time he would sleep with me without a condom and this went on for two years.....He threw me out when I told him I was pregnant; I realised later that I had not only left that house with a pregnancy but also HIV”*. Her employer has never been charged with rape or employing a minor.

The Centre for Domestic Training and Development believes there are more than a million domestic workers in Kenya. Most workers are employed on a temporary basis and their salary, time-off and medical insurance is determined at the discretion of their employer. Kenya does have legislation to protect the rights of domestic workers but it is rarely enforced and few women themselves are aware of how to access protection. Irene Opiyo, a labour policy consultant states *“most domestic workers are unskilled, have poor education and do not even know they have rights within the law.”*

As well as being at increased risk of experiencing sexual abuse, domestic workers are also at higher risk of contracting HIV because they have less exposure to HIV prevention programmes and messages. In addition, many domestic workers are also forced into sex work either as a result of losing their job or in order to supplement their low wages. Another domestic worker states: *“while I have never had sex with my boss, I have been having it with other men in the neighbourhood to earn more money when my bosses are away at work..... most of them assume I am confined [to the house] and therefore do not have sex with many people, [so] they rarely use a condom with me.”*

International NGO ‘Family Health International’ is aiming to target domestic workers in their programme and make information about HIV/AIDS available to them.

For full article see:

<http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84559>

Rwanda: Lesbians mistreated

Amnesty International report gay and lesbian people face serious hostilities, harassment and intimidation in Rwanda. Amnesty International believes the rights of lesbians in Rwanda are not respected and *“freedom of expression was limited and civil society and the media are under close scrutiny by the government”*.

In March 2009, two lesbians were arrested after attending a LGBT conference in Mozambique. The women were accused of forging documents and were detained for two weeks. They were released due to lack of evidence and the prosecution against them was subsequently withdrawn.

Amnesty International also criticise the donor community in Rwanda for not challenging or criticising the government for its violations of the gay, bisexual, lesbian and transgender community in Rwanda.

For full article see:

<http://www.afrol.com/articles/33400>

North Korean women sold in China

A US based human rights organisations is raising concerns that women fleeing hunger and repression in North Korea are being targeted by human traffickers. The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea believe *“most of the North Korean women in China are not trafficked into sexual slavery. More often they are trafficked into forced marriages.”* Their analysis builds on a series of interviews and eye witness accounts from women who have described being sold as “brides” to Chinese men and then subjected to backbreaking labour, physical assaults and sexual abuse. The women report how they live in constant fear.

The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea believe the Chinese government should work to ensure marriages between Chinese men and North Korean women are consensual and not coerced. In the Committee’s report *‘Lives for Sale: Personal Accounts of Women Fleeing North Korea to China’* they report how thousands of North Korean women in China, and their children *“remain trapped in this maze of inhumanity...As troubling as the testimony*

of these eyewitnesses is, it is important to note that these interviewees are, in many respects, among the fortunate women of North Korea...As bad as their stories are, we can only imagine that there are others whose unspoken stories are so much worse. They may be imprisoned in homes across China, unable to leave, unable to speak out, unable to find health care, unable to talk with anyone in their own language, and certainly forbidden from talking to outside interviewers". The women interviewed describe a well defined hierarchy amongst the traffickers with 'merchandise scouts', 'distributers', 'brokers' and 'transporters' all targeting vulnerable women with the promise of well-paid jobs and a better life.

To compound women's vulnerability, the Chinese government considers women from North Korea as economic migrants as opposed to asylum seekers. When caught by Chinese authorities, women are often returned to North Korea, where they are punished and treated as political traitors. The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea urges North Korean government to aid women without husbands and fathers and to grant the UN access to returnees.

For full article see:

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,4565c22547,4565c25f569,49fb1073c,0.html>

South Africa: Culture of sexual violence

A recent survey studying rape and HIV in South Africa has revealed one in four men admitted to raping women and many men have attacked more than one woman. Three out of four men confessed they first started raping women when they were in their teens and one in twenty men stated they had raped a woman in the last year.

The research conducted by the Medical Research Council, illustrate South Africa's endemic culture of sexual violence. Professor Rachel Jewkes from the MRC stated: *"We have a very, very high prevalence of rape in South Africa. I think it is down to ideas about masculinity based on gender hierarchy and sexual entitlement of men. It's rooted in an African ideal of manhood."*

The study interviewed 1,738 men in South Africa's Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. The findings revealed men who are physically violent towards women are twice as likely to be HIV positive and more likely to pay for sex and not use condoms. The MRC believe that any woman raped by a man over the age of 25 has a one in four chance of her attacker being HIV-positive.

The government in South Africa have been criticised for not addressing issues around rape and sexual violence with an estimated 7% of reported rapes resulting in any conviction. Jewkes stated: *"There's been a lot of concern about the way the criminal justice system works, because it's still woeful...the social space for debating these gender issues is now smaller than it was a few years ago. We need our government to show political leadership in changing attitudes. We need South African men, from the top to the grassroots, to take responsibility."*

Anti-rape campaigners in South Africa report how the figures demonstrate the need for reform. Dean Peacock, co-director of the Sonke Gender Justice project said: *"We need to make sure the criminal justice system is held to account. We have lots of discussion in this country, but not enough action is taken to ensure that perpetrators will face consequences."*

South African Trade Union, Solidarity also recently published a report which outlined that a child is raped in South Africa every three minutes and 88% of rapes remain unreported.

For full article see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/17/south-africa-rape-survey>

Indonesia: Trafficking fuels commercial sex work

Women in Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city are lured into the commercial sex industry by the promises of a better life. Thousands of young women are believed to have been trafficked both internally and from abroad for the purposes of prostitution.

One woman explained: *"I never chose to be a prostitute. It just happened...After my divorce, there was no way I could return to my family. I had to escape."* This woman worked in one of South East Asia's largest commercial sex venues and serviced eight men a night for about US\$30 a day.

Many interrelated factors contribute to the escalation of trafficking in countries like Indonesia. A lack of protection mechanisms allows unscrupulous agents to lure women into the sex industry without repercussion. In addition, high levels of poverty, low education and limited job opportunities make girls and women susceptible to exploitation.

Legislation was introduced in 2007 to tackle human trafficking however, full implementation has not occurred. Inefficient law enforcement and corruption has resulted in only a few cases being adequately investigated and the majority of offenders have gone unpunished. Yanti Indarsyah, a counsellor at the Pusat Pelyanan Terpadu in Surabaya, a government referral office established to assist women and children who have experienced violence said: *"Many of these people are poor and uneducated. They are unaware of their rights and easily tricked....Many victims are badly affected and may need long-term therapy."*

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84678>

Cote D'Ivoire: Girls exchanging sex for money

Human rights groups report girls as young as 10 years old are being exploited for sex in Cote d'Ivoire. Fanta Coulibaly, director of the committee to fight violence on women and children in the Ministry of Family, Women and Social Affairs believes many young girls were lured to bars and restaurants in the promise of earning extra money to buy food or pay for school fees.

Since the 2002 rebellion Cote d'Ivoire has seen unprecedented instability and increased poverty levels. Local NGO 'Centre Féminin pour la promotion des droits humains et de la démocratie en Côte d'Ivoire (CEFCI) believe many young girls from the ages of nine to 13 are exchanging sex for money. In most cases people working in the bars and restaurants approach the girls' families promising work prospects for their children. Nabaulsy Veronique, head of CEFCI's office in Odienne said: *"The girls soon find out the restaurant owners do not pay them for their work serving drinks or washing dishes. They see that this is not what they*

came for. Customers begin soliciting them for sex.” For many girls, sex work is the only means to support their family and many do not know of any other means to earn money.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84834>

UK Events and Conferences

Amnesty International launch Iranian film festival.

Many of the films presented by Amnesty International as part of the Iranian film festival focus on the role, circumstances and experiences of women in Iran.

All films will be screened at the Amnesty International's Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA.

Films include:

The Day I became a woman 22nd July 2009

This film is about women in Iran at different stages in their lives - a girl on her 9th birthday no longer plays with the boy who had been her friend; a young woman who enters a bicycle race against the wishes of her husband; an old woman who comes into money.

For further information and booking details see:

http://www.amnesty.org.uk/events_details.asp?ID=1213

The Circle 26th August 2009

The Circle begins with a black screen and the cries of a woman giving birth in a maternity ward. The newborn child is a baby girl, the grandmother moans 'the in-laws will be furious. They'll insist on divorce'. From day one, being female in a patriarchal theocracy like Iran marks you out as an inferior citizen.

This screening will be presented by the Womens' Action Network and will be followed by a discussion and Q&A with invited guests

For further information and booking details see:

http://www.amnesty.org.uk/events_booking.asp?ID=1215#booking

Women's Rights on Marriage, Sexuality and Health in Islam

29th June 10 - 2.30

London, E1

This seminar is a joint programme between FORWARD and the Islamic Cultural Centre. The seminar aims to explore women's health, sexuality and rights in the Islamic context, share research findings and programme experiences in responding to so-called "honour based" violence and other forms of gender based violence. The seminar will also discuss strategies on how Muslim communities and leaders can respond better to promoting the rights of women and girls.

For further information and booking details contact:

Khalda El-Hafiz: khalda@forwarduk.org.uk

Or call FORWARD on: 020 8960 4000 / 07868708522

New International Publications:

'Refugee Girls - The Invisible Faces of War'

Women's Refugee Commission

ISBN 1-58030-079-0

This report acknowledges how girls are especially vulnerable and often more profoundly affected than other groups in armed conflict situations, yet their circumstances are rarely discussed. The report argues, over 140 million girls live in areas affected by armed conflict yet their needs are frequently overlooked or ignored. Living in armed conflict areas places many girls at risk of rape, sexual violence and physical attack. Girls are often abandoned, unsupported and rejected if abused. In addition, during armed conflict girls are forced into unfamiliar roles frequently being the main provider and often in situations where their families, in desperate situations barter their bodies as commodities.

This report tries to tell the untold stories of refugee girls and outlines their difficulties, circumstances and resilience. The report highlights the types of violence girls and women are vulnerable to; the role of girl soldiers; risks of trafficking and forced early marriage as well as discussing life in a refugee camp.

Issues around children applying for asylum in the United States are also discussed. Circumstances whereby children are forced to represent themselves in court with no attorney or adult to help them are criticised along with placing children and families in detention centres with prison like conditions. The report illustrates how the harrowing journey girls face before they claim asylum are often met negatively at Border Patrol stations. Girls report being held in cells with adult males, being given inadequate food, having limited access to medical care and with no opportunities for physical activity. The report also discusses the difficulties women and girls face fitting their asylum claim within the Refugee Convention especially if their persecution is perpetrated by private citizens.

For full report see:

http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/refugee_girls_book.pdf

'Trafficking in Persons Report 2009' **US State Department**

The ninth annual Trafficking in Persons report has recently been published. The report aims to increase global awareness on human trafficking and assist foreign governments attempting to tackle all forms of human trafficking. The report illustrates an updated, global look at trafficking and includes countries of origin, destination and transit countries.

The report covers a time-frame from April 2008- March 2009. A narrative describes the situation of trafficking in each country along with the government's initiatives and recommendations for further action. Each country is assessed and graded in relation to whether they are implementing the minimum standards to eliminate all forms of trafficking of persons. Countries that are not deemed to comply with minimum standards receive a Tier 3 ranking. This ranking could result in the US withholding non-humanitarian aid and non-trade related foreign assistance.

The Trafficking in Persons report specifically analyses foreign governments' efforts to punish trafficking offenders, to adequately protect victims and to prevent trafficking. The report also discusses 'commendable initiatives around the world' and encourages sharing information of good practice.

For full report see:

<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2009/index.htm>

'Guidelines for NGOs working with trafficked people' ***A publication by the working group on the National Roundtable on People Trafficked to assist Non-Government Organisation's working with trafficked people***

Australian Human Right Commission

These guidelines aim to provide a comprehensive resource and practical advice for NGOs working with people who have been trafficked. The guidelines promote the best interest of victims of trafficking and discuss issues around informed consent, privacy, protection and the importance of culturally appropriate services. The resource outlines ten key principles for working safely and ethically with people who have been trafficked including for purposes of sexual servitude. The document provides information and practical examples regarding what information NGO's need to know including information on the rights of victims, referral agencies, court procedures as well as advice on how to conduct interviews and the types of questions to ask.

This document should be read in conjunction with other relevant laws and guidelines including those listed in the 'Resources' section of the report.

For full report see:

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a2e3d322.html>

'Give girls a chance – tackling child labour, a key to the future'**International Labour Organisation**

ISBN: 978-92-2-122374-0

This report presents a comprehensive profile of how the current situation of child labour affects girls. The International Labour Organisation estimates there are approximately 100 million girls globally affected by child labour. Many girls have little or no access to education and continually work in situations that directly places their health and safety in jeopardy.

The report highlights how girls are involved in some of the most dangerous forms of child labour including forced and bonded labour and prostitution. Alongside analysing the types of child labour by girls, education issues and the youth labour market, the report also publishes new statistics from sixteen countries. According to the report, girls account for approximately 46% of all child labour. Although statistically there is little difference between the hours in economic activity between boys and girls, girls are often responsible for unpaid housework and therefore work longer hours than boys. The report concludes with key recommendations and policy responses.

For full report see:

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a360f42.html>

'Nowhere to Turn: Failure to Protect, Support and Assure Justice for Darfuri women'**Physicians for Human Rights in partnership with Harvard Humanitarian Initiative**

This report provides a systematic assessment of the situation of sexual assault and other human rights violations suffered by Darfuri women. The report aims to document the effects of war-related crimes and sexual violence on women in refugee camps in Chad.

The research used both qualitative and quantitative methods and reveals women's experiences in their villages, during flight and in refugee camps. Women discussed personal accounts of being raped multiple times during Janjaweed or Sudanese soldier attacks on their villages. The women interviewees recalled similar accounts of gang rape, public rape in front of family or members of the community and accounts of abduction. Many women had witnessed family and friends being raped and knew women who had been abducted and never returned. The women discussed how they found it difficult to access any medical attention and had nowhere to turn for help. Having fled and upon arrival in the refugee camps women discussed high levels of insecurity, uneasiness and fear of other physical and sexual attacks. Some women also discussed incidents of brutality and oppression within the camps. The research discusses high level of depression and mental health deterioration amongst the women. The report highlights responsibilities of the UNHCR, the government of Chad, the international community including the International Criminal Court and agencies to protect women refugees.

For full report see:

<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/sudan/news/nowhere-to-turn.pdf>

Charter of rights of women seeking asylum



Total Endorsements: 146

Google Group Membership: 84

Progress Report

Gender Issues discussed at the National Asylum Stakeholder Forum.

At the May 2009 meeting of the National Asylum Stakeholders Forum between UK Border Agency officials and stakeholders, Maurice Wren, Director of Asylum Aid, was invited to lead a discussion on gender issues and the asylum system. After showing the DVD of "Random Acts", Asylum Aid's play about a woman asylum seeker going through the UK system, he highlighted the systematic downgrading and discounting of gender specific persecutory acts. He argued that this attitude is born from an undermining perception among UKBA staff that gender based persecution is unmeritorious. Maurice then introduced the Charter as a document which brings together reasonable goals for changing the treatment of gender issues during the entire asylum process by the UKBA. Hugh Ind, UKBA strategic lead on asylum, accepted Maurice's analysis that there is a 'structural, systematic and cultural' problem which needed to be addressed and which he said would receive more attention. He said that in the next four to eight weeks plans on how to make gender issues an important agenda topic and how to integrate gender into the end to end asylum process would be developed. The discussions about the Charter showed a large number of the organisations around the table to have endorsed it and support its goals. The UNHCR's representative suggested more training on gender issues and better country information on women's issues be provided to the UKBA staff. The responses from the attendees at the NASF meeting were encouraging and the steps forward which Hugh Ind talked about give direction to future meetings between the UKBA and Asylum Aid.

Other news

This Charter update will appear in Women's Asylum News regularly. If you have any information you wish to share such as progress on women's issues or concerns you have, please contact Charter@asylumaid.org.uk

If your organisation would like to endorse the Charter or you would like any further information about the Charter, please see www.asylumaid.org.uk

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