

women's asylum news

refugee women's resource project @ asylumaid

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New Charter of Rights of Women Seeking Asylum

If a woman suffers rape, domestic violence or honour crimes in the UK there are gender-sensitive practices that have been developed within the criminal justice system to respond appropriately. If a woman suffers similar violence in her home country and comes to the UK to seek protection, gender appropriate practices in the asylum system are far more limited. Asylum Aid believes that the UK Border Agency should learn the lessons from the criminal justice system and respond to women's cases to a similar standard.

In furtherance of this, the Refugee Women's Resource Project at Asylum Aid, in consultation with a number of specialist organisations in the refugee, women's and human rights sectors, has produced a Charter of rights of women seeking asylum. This exciting new initiative aims to influence the UK Border Agency to create a gender-sensitive culture throughout its policies and practice. By providing a framework of principles to address the treatment of women asylum seekers in a more strategic way alongside suggestions as to how the UK Border Agency could improve its operational practice, the Charter can be used to persuade the UK Border Agency to remove the discriminatory barriers women face. It covers all aspects of the end-to-end asylum process: the asylum determination system, accommodation, welfare, detention and removal.

Ensuring fair treatment for women who are claiming asylum means that the Refugee Convention needs to be interpreted in a gender sensitive way. Since the Home Office incorporated its Asylum Policy Instruction on *gender issues in the asylum claim* in March 2004, the UK Border Agency has made some further progress but initiatives have tended to be piecemeal suggesting a failure to recognise gender as an underlying factor fundamental to creating a fair system. In addition there is, too often, a disconnection between the policy and the operational parts of the UK Border Agency, particularly on gender issues.

Actions suggested in the Charter include that the UK Border Agency should undertake gender impact assessments in relation to all asylum policies, train their staff to improve the quality of decision making in relation to women's claims and end the detention of families with children.

Organisations are being asked to endorse the Charter and, in doing so, commit themselves to promoting those actions which are within their sphere of influence (eg an NGO working for detained asylum seekers would promote the actions to do with detention). The Charter has already been endorsed by 20 organisations including: Amnesty International UK, Bail for Immigration Detainees, Helen Bamber Foundation, Refugee Action, Refugee Council, Refugee Women's Association and Rights of Women.

A multi-layered strategy is being developed to promote the Charter. This includes using the Charter as the basis for discussions with the UK Border Agency through formal stakeholders meetings and informal negotiations, setting up a google group to provide a network for feedback between people working on the actions suggested in the Charter and holding a conference to discuss with practitioners how to cooperate on promoting these issues.

The overall aim of the Charter is to remove the barriers women face so that they can have their asylum claims heard fairly and gain the protection they need. For your organisation to endorse the Charter or to join the google group, please go to www.asylumaid.org.uk

Charter of rights of women seeking asylum (summary)

All asylum seekers have the right to be treated consistently, with fairness, dignity and respect in accordance with the UK's obligations under the international refugee and human rights conventions.

For women, this means:

1. women seeking asylum have the right to have their protection claims determined by an asylum system in the UK that is informed, in all aspects of its policy and operations, by a thorough understanding of the particular forms of persecution and human rights abuses that women experience because of their gender and of their particular needs as women;
2. women seeking asylum have the right to an asylum determination process that recognises and takes into account their experiences of persecution and human rights abuses;
3. women seeking asylum have the right to accommodation, support and healthcare appropriate to their particular needs as women;
4. women seeking asylum have the right to be treated with dignity in a way that is appropriate to their needs as women and that ensures their safety if in detention or during removal.

Significant legal Case

AA (Uganda) v Secretary of State for the Home Office [2008]¹

The Court of Appeal heard AA (Uganda) in April 2008. The reconsideration was called to explore the decision of the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT) appeal of July 2007. The AIT dismissed AA's claim to remain in the United Kingdom under article 3 and article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and upheld the order for her deportation.

The Secretary of State accepted that AA would be at serious risk of suffering serious harm were she to be returned to northern Uganda. Therefore, the live issue for the Court of Appeal was the concept of internal relocation and whether it would be unduly harsh to return AA to Kampala.

This article will outline the facts of the case, the conclusions of the AIT alongside the Court of Appeal rulings.

Facts of the case

AA was born in Uganda in the 1980s. It was agreed that she had been subjected to degrading and inhuman treatment. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) had killed both AA's parents and she then lived with two aunts and an uncle who all brutally abused her. AA came to the UK to stay with an aunt whose husband raped her and she subsequently became pregnant. After having an abortion, AA attempted suicide.

It was accepted that if AA returned to Uganda she would be forced to enter into prostitution due to having no family, no education and no access to support.

Proceedings for the Court of Appeal

The Court of Appeal looked at whether the AIT had misdirected itself on the following issues:

1. Whether returns generally of unaccompanied women to Kampala would be unduly harsh?
2. Would it be unduly harsh to return AA in her particular circumstances to Kampala?

The AIT had accepted that taking account of all the evidence before them, AA faced poverty, a lack of accommodation on return to Uganda and would be driven into prostitution. For the AIT, these conditions did not make her relocation to Kampala unduly harsh.

During the AIT hearing, Immigration Judge Coker did not have the benefit of *AH (Sudan)*² which was decided after the determination but was shown *Januzi*. From that case she drew, at §43 of her determination, the guidance of Lord Hope of Craighead³:

The words "unduly harsh" set the standard that must be met for [relocation] to be regarded as unreasonable. If the claimant can live a relatively normal life there judged by the standards that prevail in the country of his nationality generally, and if he can reach the less hostile part without undue hardship or undue difficulty, it will not be unreasonable to expect him to move there.

¹ AA (Uganda) v Secretary of State for the Home Office [2008] EWCA Civ 579; [2008] WLR (D) 170

² AH (Sudan) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2007] 3 WLR 832.

³ [2006] 2 AC 426[47]

Expert country evidence was submitted to the AIT to assess the prospects for AA if she returned to Kampala. The AIT accepted that:

'...individuals in Kampala without access to social or familial networks have great difficulty finding employment and that [AA] would have difficulty finding accommodation without employment and her opportunities for furthering her education would, in the light of that lack of employment be very limited. There are however many young women in that situation.'

In response to the conclusions of the AIT, Lord Justice Buxton at the Court of Appeal found that even if it was common for other young women in Uganda to be forced to turn to prostitution to survive, the AIT was not entitled to conclude that enforced prostitution was within the category of 'normal country conditions.' He stated:

"Quite simply, there must be some conditions in the place of relocation that are unacceptable to the extent that it would be unduly harsh to return the applicant to them even if the conditions are widespread in the place of relocation."

During the appeal, the AIT also suggested that due to AA's active involvement in the church in the UK, AA could gain support from the church in Uganda.

'AA has been involved in the church here in the United Kingdom. The evidence before me indicated that the church in Uganda is active..... In Kampala she will have no kinship support but there was no evidence before

me that she would not be able to obtain church support.'

However regarding this point, the Court of Appeal concluded that this decision "was not based on relevant evidence and [was].. perverse" as it did not evaluate how the church "would offset the dangers otherwise facing AA".

The Court of Appeal also established the AIT had failed to give due weight to the medical evidence which went directly to AA's ability to cope with the pressures of internal relocation in Uganda. The Court of Appeal stated the AIT was wrong to assume that the lack of an updated medical report, when the previous report had referred to 'chronic depression', meant that AA had recovered. In addition, during the appeal, the AIT dismissed a report by a qualified and experienced psychotherapist on grounds that the psychotherapist was not qualified to diagnose PTSD. According to the Court of Appeal, the dismissal of this report by the AIT led to a failure to take account of the reasons put forward by the psychotherapist as to why AA recently had fewer psychotherapy sessions.

The Court of Appeal ruled that these collective failures led to an error of the assessment of the AIT as to how far AA would be able to bear the conditions on return and relocation to Kampala. Therefore, the Court of Appeal found that relocation to Kampala for AA would be unduly harsh and quashed the decision of the AIT.

Conclusions

The decision of AA Uganda is significant. This ruling addresses the issues of return for a young, abused, uneducated woman with no family connections to Kampala. Moreover, the decision explores the

guidance and interpretation of existing case law given by the Court of Appeal on the correct approach to the undue harshness test. This test looks at whether an appellant can relocate within their country of origin and what constitutes undue harshness.

In contrast to the AIT, for the Court of Appeal, returning and relocating an appellant to a livelihood of prostitution would be unduly harsh. Whilst conditions are to be assessed in relation to the country of origin following the correct interpretation of the European Qualification Directive, the decision maker must take into account the age and the particular vulnerability of the person seeking asylum. This decision reaffirms that some conditions are unduly harsh whatever the location. The case of AA called for an enquiry as to whether conditions in Kampala and enforced prostitution fell into that category. In not addressing that enquiry and the particular vulnerability of AA, the AIT acted irrationally and its determination was overruled.

UK News

The hell of being an asylum seeker

Mark Haddon, successful novelist⁴ has written an article for the Guardian covering his visit to the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in London citing the stories of people he met during the day. This includes a woman from Ethiopia who was dispersed to Glasgow with only one of her two daughters and a woman from Uganda who talks about her experiences in Yarl's Wood and Harmondsworth detention centres. Whilst detained, her children were taken from her and she

⁴ Books include: 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time' and 'A Spot of Bother'

was told that she would only be reunited with them on the flight to Uganda. She describes her abusive treatment by the people who tried to put her on the plane and her protests at being returned which led to the pilot intervening and refusing to fly her. Along with her children, she was taken back to Yarl's Wood for another four months. She now lives on a friend's floor with her children.

The article raises several issues that asylum seekers face in the UK including difficulties women face with their claims. Nazek Ramadan who works at the MRC states how the British government defines its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention extremely narrowly. Nazek uses a Home Office refusal letter from a woman asylum seeker from Algeria to illustrate the point. The letter states: *"You claim that you were ill-treated during detention, tortured and raped. The Secretary of State does not condone any violations of human rights which may have been committed by members of the security forces...[but] ..to bring yourself within the scope of the UN Convention, you would have to show that these incidents were not simply the random acts of individuals, but were a sustained pattern or campaign of persecution directed at you by the authorities."* Haddon states: "It is worth reading that paragraph again. The Home Office is telling this woman that they don't care if she has been raped, tortured and imprisoned. It will help her only if she can prove that this was done repeatedly and according to some kind of plan".

By looking at recent media headlines, Haddon also challenges the 'false and deliberately misleading' way asylum is portrayed in the media and highlights the government's role within it. He states: "We have become so used to this kind of rhetoric that it seems almost

normal. But turn the clock back 40 years and replace the words 'asylum seekers' with 'blacks,' or turn it back another 30 and replace them with the word 'Jews' and we can see just how poisonous it really is."

For full article see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/jun/15/immigration.familyandrelationships>

European Court of Human Rights refuses HIV positive woman (N)

The European Courts of Human Rights in Strasbourg has ruled that the UK would not be in breach of the European Convention of Human Rights if an HIV positive woman is returned to Uganda. The decision finalised a 10-year legal battle.

The woman (known as N) escaped Uganda and claimed asylum 10 years ago. Her claim was based on being raped and ill-treated by government soldiers due to her connection with the rebel Lords Resistance Army. Shortly after arriving in the UK, N was diagnosed with two severe Aids related illnesses. A report submitted at that time predicted her life expectancy if returned to Uganda would be 12 months. The Secretary of State however rejected the asylum claim and concluded the treatment of HIV/AIDS in Uganda was comparable to any other African country and was available at a subsidised rate.

The decision of N at the European Court of Human Rights tightened and reaffirmed interpretations of caselaw. With this ruling applications applying for leave to remain in the UK based on medical conditions will only be successful if an applicant can prove their medical condition is critical with a limited life expectancy, there is no medical treatment available in their country of origin and no social care to allow them to

die in dignity. There may however still be some cases where legal arguments can be won under the dissenting judgement in the case of N, for example mother and child cases (see WAN Issue 74)⁵.

For full article see:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/aids-treatment-ugandan-woman-refused-asylum-834794.html>

Plans to increase use of detention including at Yarl's Wood

The UK Border Agency (UKBA) recently announced plans to increase the use of detention for asylum seekers and illegal immigrants by 60%. Proposals for new centres near Gatwick airport and additional wings at Harmondsworth, Dover and Oakington have been submitted. In addition, the Home Office plan to build new centres including one at the site of Yarl's Wood Immigration and Removal centre, used to detain women asylum seekers and families.

The Refugee Council stated: "This is disappointing news, particularly the announcement that some of the extra places will be used to 'fast track' more people through the asylum system. These people are people who are detained on arrival, who have committed no crime, and who are often extremely vulnerable, yet who are locked up in circumstances where there is little access to information and not knowing how long they will be imprisoned."

Immigration Minister, Liam Byrne said: "We remove an immigration offender every eight minutes - but my target is to remove more, and remove them faster".

For full article see:

⁵ 'Home Office Appeals: Dubious Grounds' leading article - Women's Asylum News Issue 74, April 2008

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7408121.stm>

Calls for guardians to work with trafficked children

Leading politicians are lobbying the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith to address growing concerns that hundreds of children suspected of being trafficked to the UK are disappearing. English councils and social services at key ports have lost contact with over 400 children who were in care and believed to be trafficked to the UK for forced prostitution, domestic servitude and the drugs trade between 2004-2007.

Concerns are growing that local authorities are failing to protect children, predominantly girls, and prevent them from going back to their traffickers. A key issue is the lack of secure housing; with no safe houses available in England children are placed in less secure foster homes or council residence. Richard Ross, manager for the unit of child asylum seekers at Solihull, Birmingham states that: "we are in competition with the traffickers, they exert a powerful pull over young people in our care... There are some traffickers who keep calling them up and it normally doesn't take long for them to succumb".

UK NGOs such as ECPAT UK, Anti-Slavery International and NSPCC are strong advocates of a 'guardianship' programme similar to the Dutch system.

The Home Office revealed in a statement that "the government doesn't believe it is necessary to set up a system of guardianship for all unaccompanied asylum seeking children and that family courts provided sufficient protection".

For full article see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/may/14/childprotection.ukcrime>

UK Events

Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST) Manchester

Book Launch

11th July 6-8pm

Manchester Town Hall, 1st Floor Banquet Room

WAST Manchester are launching:

'Am I Safe Yet? - Stories of Women Seeking Asylum in Britain.'

This book charts the life stories of nine WAST Manchester members and provides an insight into why women flee and seek international protection as well as their experiences in the UK. The book includes background information on the British legal system and is illustrated with portraits and poetry.

The evening includes the book launch, readings, musical entertainment and refreshments.

For further information and to confirm attendance email:

WASTManchester@yahoo.co.uk

Breakfast Seminar with Asylum Aid and Poppy Project to launch new research:

'Good Intentions: A Review of the New Asylum Model and its Impact on Trafficked Women Claiming Asylum'

23rd July 9.30-11am

Amnesty International, UK Human Rights Action Centre, London

This joint research report analyses the changes made to the asylum process

with particular reference to the effects on POPPY service users.

The breakfast seminar will present and discuss key findings within the report as well as debate key recommendations and changes needed to create a more victim-centred approach. Speakers include Denise Marshall OBE, Chief Executive of POPPY and Debora Singer, RWRP Coordinator at Asylum Aid.

For further information, to register for the launch seminar or request a copy of the report, please contact: sarah.mills@eaveshousing.co.uk

International News

Mauritania: Justice not working for rape victims

IRIN report on the slow progress of prosecuting rape cases in Mauritania. Lawyer, Bilal Ould Dik states the legal system is largely based on Sharia and Islamic law with no precise definition of sexual violence. Consequently, rape prosecutions are extremely rare and "often just end with a settlement between the family of the perpetrator and the victim". The perception of sexual abuse is still largely unacknowledged and instead referred to as 'zina,' meaning voluntary sexual relations outside of marriage. Zeinebou mint Taleb Moussam, chairwoman for a local NGO, 'Mauritanian association for the health of mothers and children' (AMSME), believes that "for judges the rape victim is 50 per cent responsible for what happened to them."

In 2005, a national juvenile code was passed to strengthen legal protection available to children who are sexually assaulted. Along with this a government child protection department and special

police force to protect minors was established. However, few judges appear to have been sufficiently trained in implementing the code and rely on previous practices. In addition, within Mauritania there are strict gender divides within the courts system, allowing men to become judges with only informal Koranic education, whilst women are prevented from becoming magistrates. Moussam states that until there is an increase in the number of men prosecuted for rape and social attitudes to rape are addressed "the topic of sexual abuse will remain taboo in this country."

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78182>

Burundi: widespread sexual abuse

The civil war in Burundi (1993-2005) witnessed widespread violence, rape and sexual assault targeted at women. Since the conflict however women continue to experience sexual abuse and violence on a growing level. UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon reported to the Security Council in May 2008 of "significant increases in the incidence of rapes ... recorded since January 2008."

Amnesty International state that the majority of victims are girls under the age of 18. Many girls and women do not report rape out of shame and fear. Local Human Rights group 'The League of Iteka' believes that the knowledge that a married woman has been raped makes her vulnerable to being evicted and abandoned by her husband. Data collected by Iteka also suggests a growing increase in child rape victims including 12-year-old girl whose father accepted a payment of \$60 from the perpetrator not to pursue the matter. Iteka also suggest an increase in the number of incest cases of young girls

being raped by their fathers or grandfathers. Arnaud Royer, a researcher at Amnesty states "girls as young as three are the victims of rape today in Burundi. Rape is the most reported form of sexual violence in the country, committed by both state and non state actors, but is becoming more and more prevalent in the home and community"

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78566>

DRC: Sexual violence amongst Angolan deportees

Since 2003 the Angolan authorities have been targeting illegal workers from the DRC who have been working in and around the diamond mines along the borders.

A recent bout of deportations from Angola to DRC has raised concerns regarding the level of sexual violence women have experienced in Angola. Many of the 27,000 recent deportees arriving in DRC have been sexually abused. Pierre Didi Mpata, a doctor for a local NGO said 80 per cent of women he had seen had been raped. One woman stated "I was badly beaten up and raped by five Angolan police officers when they forcefully expelled us." Mpata also explains that this woman can now "barely stand because she has a sexually transmitted infection. She is also six months pregnant".

Over twenty thousand people expelled from Angola without food and blankets were made to walk back through the DRC border, a distance of over 95 kilometres. Mpata states that many women who have arrived are waiting for operations due to internal injuries caused through sexual violence.

In December 2007, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) denounced what it described as "the pervasive and systematic use of rape and violence perpetrated by the Angolan army during the expulsions of Congolese migrants working in diamond mines"

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78689>

Senegal: No support for women who experience domestic violence

One in four women experience domestic violence in Senegal and most suffer in silence. A culture of impunity in which husbands can beat their wives and a lack of government response leaves many women unsupported and vulnerable to further abuse.

The story of a 35-year-old woman highlights several issues women face. The woman, who was married for 10 years states: "At first, whenever we had an argument my husband would shout and occasionally slap me, then gradually he started to beat me harder...I do not know how long it lasted but I couldn't take anymore and I eventually went to complain to the police." After presenting the police with medical certificates to document the abuse she had received, her brother-in-law found out and demanded the police remove her records, which they did.

Although a national campaign was launched a few years ago to address domestic violence, to date there has been little government commitment, with no government structure established and no shelters to help women fleeing violence. In 1999 a law was introduced to punish perpetrators of domestic violence with a prison sentence from one to five years and a fine. The law however is "poorly enforced"

according to Diouf Nafissatou Mbodj, president of the Association of Women Lawyers of Senegal (AJS). A former judge also states that many judges are pressurised from families to minimise penalties.

Adji Fatou Ndiaye, a coordinator at the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Senegal states: "In Senegal, it is accepted that women are subordinate to men. A woman should always follow a man – her husband, her son, her uncle, or her father - even if his expression of his domination turns violent... There are even religious arguments to legitimise this, and it [violence] is often accepted in families. It is not uncommon to see a mother proud to see her daughters suffer in her marriage, because people can say she has learned to behave in the household."

In addition, it is also extremely difficult for women to be granted a divorce. The majority of marriages are traditional unions occurring in a mosque that are not registered and given a certificate. Therefore, even if a woman wishes to pursue a divorce, it is impossible to obtain this without a marriage certificate. The many obstacles women face in order to leave and divorce their husband means many women are forced to remain in violent marriages. For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78743>

Pakistan: Girls sold to settle disputes

Although child marriage (marriage under the age of 16 for girls and 18 for boys) has been 'legally limited' in Pakistan with the Marriage Restraint Act 1929 and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, child marriage still occurs regularly. Many girls are married from the age of

12 and some younger girls are "given away to older men to settle disputes."

Statistics from the International Population Council reveal 58 per cent of females from rural areas are married before the age of 20, with a large proportion married before the age of 16. The province of Sindh in Southern Pakistan has the highest statistics for early marriage. Early marriage is not just an agreement between families, tribal councils sometimes rule that girl children should be used to settle feuds between families.

A recent 'jirga' (a gathering of tribal elders) along Sindh's western border ruled that 15 girls aged between three and ten would be married to men from a different tribe to settle an eight-year dispute. Iqbal Haider, a former senator and now co-chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan states, "It is terrible that such things happen even now in our society and it is worse still that the marriage of small girls is used to settle these matters. This is barbaric."

Holding jirgas and using girls as compensation is illegal in many provinces including Sindh, however the practice still continues. For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78751>

Afghanistan: No justice for girls raped

Justice for children who are raped is extremely rare for families in Afghanistan. One ten-year-old girl was grabbed from walking in the streets and taken to an army officer who raped her in his office. The girl was told if she reported the rape then her parents would be killed. As the girl was returned semi-conscious to her family, her

parents were told that a car accidentally hit her and had caused the abdominal bleeding. After a doctor confirmed the girl had been raped her father went to Afghanistan's Human Rights Organisation (AHRO) to help bring the case to court.

Hangama Anwary, a commissioner for the rights of children at AHRO believes "many cases are unreported...Some parents think by reporting sex offences against their children they will only bring dishonour on their families." In 2007 a 13-year-old girl was gang raped and tortured by seven men. All seven men were released two days after they were arrested due to a lack of evidence. Lal Gul Lal, chairman of AHRO, believes many men are able to escape justice as they have the support of militia leaders and there is weak rule of law.

Having no facilities, support or compensation mechanisms to help girls deal with the trauma associated with rape also compounds the lack of justice.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78756>

Sierra Leone: Girls blamed for rape

In Sierra Leone many victims of rape are often blamed for the attack. Hannah Karbo, a counsellor who works with abused women believes this prejudice and cultural attitude to blame the victim (predominantly young girls) adds more pain and suffering to the situation. According to Karbo "Most of the children... were not only raped but also physically assaulted by their parents. Parents tend to blame the children, saying they should not have let it happen to them. They don't take into account the age difference – how is a four year-old child supposed to fight off a 40 year-old man?"

Karbo, who works at a health clinic in Freetown says children who have been raped are seriously beaten by their parents, they are often scolded, have chilli peppers inserted in their vaginas and have their hair shaved. She states how girls are often beaten in order for their parents to find out what happened and again as a punishment.

Health workers at the health clinic try to encourage families to see rape as a legal issue and to pursue prosecutions in courts. However, even if a family wishes to do this, they have to wait over 12 months for a trial. In this time the family are usually placed under huge pressure by the perpetrator to drop the case and if the perpetrator is well-known in the community, the family will be ostracised if they don't drop charges.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78857>

Guinea: Pressures to be a sex worker

The pressure young girls face to become sex workers in Guinea is highlighted in one case. The girl's mother could no longer afford to provide the basics for the family so she was encouraged to leave school and enter the sex trade. Now the girl states that "I bring home rice, bread and plantains – I help my mother a lot - but I can't buy anything more because life has changed here - prices are rising so high my earnings only cover the basics." As well as financial pressures there is an increased risk of contracting HIV. "I have an HIV test every six months – organisations come around and offer them to us. I try to always insist clients use a condom but sometimes it means I have to charge them lower prices, and I end up losing clients that way." The girl also explains the difficulties and risk associated with

sex work in Guinea. "We get a lot of military men here, but they often round us up in their trucks and take us out to the fields to rape us – and they end up paying nothing at all." The girl has been working on the streets for over a year now and believes "more and more young girls are doing this work. I imagine most of them are leaving school like me". For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78442>

Burkina Faso: Difficulties implementing child trafficking laws

A new law has been passed in Burkina Faso that increases the jail sentencing of people convicted of child trafficking to a maximum of 10 years. Child protection agencies are however concerned that increasing sentences alone will not decrease the number of children trafficked. Since 2000, the police have intercepted the trafficking of 6000 children who had been trafficked in Burkina Faso. The ministry of social welfare and national solidarity are concerned that trafficking is increasing and is prevalent in all provinces of the country.

Naba Jérémie Wangré, project manager at the Burkina Faso Red Cross believes that even with the new laws, it would be difficult to prosecute people for trafficking as judges assume parent's give their consent for their children to live abroad for better work opportunities. Child protection agencies believe a more integrated approach is needed to address the issue across the region. Wangré also highlights the practical difficulties of working with children who have been trafficked and that "even when we reunite children, many of them will return to their trafficked destinations."

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78570>

Central African Republic: Women unaware of rights

The UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) estimates that over 15 per cent of women in northern CAR have experienced a form of gender based violence in their lifetime. Marguerite Zanaba, a women's rights advocate states "We live in a traditional society which still looks down upon us. Our rights are ignored, we are victims of violence and our young girls are not spared either."

Although the CAR government have introduced some legislation to help protect women's rights few people, especially in northern areas are aware of the practicalities and content of the law.

Zanaba states that "Most of us are Muslim women and we cannot do anything that goes against our society, which is very respectful of the Koran. We are reduced to having children and even our young daughters have no future." Zanaba recommends that the "government must do something to prevent our children from getting into marriage too early. They are too young for polygamous households. They get unwanted pregnancies too early, others die while giving birth; we want our children to go to school to help us while we rot in our homes."

Zanaba is part of a campaign to help sensitise people on women's rights including understanding their rights on FGM, early marriage and polygamy.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=78233>

New Publications – International

***We Need a Law for Liberation
Gender, Sexuality and Human Rights
in a Changing Turkey***

**Human Rights Watch
May 2008
ISBN: 1-56432-316-1**

The research documents levels of violence, harassment and abuse experienced by lesbian and bisexual women, gay men and transgender people in Turkey. The 'silence and violence' chapter involved interviewing 23 lesbian and bisexual women and specifically highlights the stories of two lesbians living in Istanbul and the issues they face. The chapter explores the power of the family and discusses legislative gaps with regard to women being targeted and abused because of their sexual orientation. The women interviewed revealed how their sexual orientation is considered a source of shame by their families and has often led to violence, forced marriage and attacks. The research also examines restrictive patriarchal social and cultural codes placed on lesbian and bisexual women.

Whilst acknowledging some progress made in Turkey with regards to law and policy the report concludes how no explicit protection is offered to LGBT people. The research highlights specific recommendations for the Turkish government, the medical profession and the European Union.

For full research report see:
<http://hrw.org/reports/2008/turkey0508/turkey0508web.pdf>

***Forced marriage with the LRA,
Uganda***

**Kristopher Calson and Dyan
Mazurana
Fienstein International Centre
May 2008**

This research explores the forced marriage and abuse of girls to Lords Resistance Army (LRA) members in northern Uganda. Approximately 60,000 children in Uganda have been abducted by the LRA. For girls and young women, life in captivity includes domestic servitude, sexual slavery, forced labour, forced marriage and enforced pregnancies.

The research methodology involved the testimonies of 100 women who were abducted into forced marriage to LRA members, ex LRA fighters, community leaders and international and local NGOs.

This research analyses the complexity of issues and the long-term physical and psychological impact on abducted young girls and women. This includes the challenges faced when girls are returned to their families, community responses and the involvement of captor 'husbands' outside of captivity. The research also investigates forced marriage within local customary, national and international laws. The research concludes how forced marriage is a crime against humanity and recommends key steps to address sexual and gender based crimes.

For full research report see:
<http://fic.tufts.edu/?pid=80>

Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls 2008

Special Focus: In the shadow of war

Plan International, 2008

ISBN: 978-0-9550479-4-7

This research highlights the unique experience women and girls face in conflict situations worldwide. As well as vulnerabilities to sexual violence and abuse, the report explores the additional responsibilities placed upon girls during periods of insecurity, their gaps in education and limited opportunities. The research also examines how the inclusion of young women and girls in post conflict situations are frequently overlooked.

The research focuses on five key areas affecting girls including: participation and empowerment, security and protection, access to basic services, economic security and gender roles and relations. The report also includes case studies and children's stories from Haiti, Liberia and Timor-Leste.

This second of nine reports from Plan concludes with a series of recommendations outlining key policy and legal perspectives.

For full research report see:

http://www.plan-international.org/news/girls_war_report/

Trafficking of Persons Report

**US State Department
June 2008**

This is the eighth annual report by the US State Department documenting the issues, efforts and laws introduced to help combat human trafficking in 170 countries. The report explores all-major

forms of human trafficking including for domestic servitude, sex trafficking and prostitution, children exploited for commercial sex and child sex tourism. This edition also discusses 'topics of special interest' including: 'street children and trafficking,' 'victim trauma and recovery', 'statelessness and trafficking,' 'prostitution and trafficking: adjusting policy to reality' and the 'custody of child trafficking victims.'

The report includes the country profiles of all 170 countries citing their 'tier watch ranking', documented prosecutions and governmental protection and prevention mechanisms introduced and implemented over the last 12 months.

For research reports see:

<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/>

Asylum Rights Watch

Asylum Rights Watch

Many people have compelling examples of how asylum seekers are treated in the UK but do not have the opportunity to bring these to the attention of the policy makers and the public. In response, Asylum Aid launched its Asylum Rights Watch Survey in 2007 so that people who have come into contact with the UK's asylum system can tell us their experiences and contribute to our policy and campaigning work.

In May 2008 Asylum Aid launched three new dossiers reflecting the issues most frequently highlighted by survey respondents between October 2007 and April 2008.

The first introductory sheet presents a general overview of the submissions and illustrates a widespread lack of confidence amongst survey participants about how the system treats asylum seekers and decides on their claims for protection in the UK. The second information sheet highlights responses that reflect the growing problem of destitution amongst asylum seekers; and the third dossier presents respondents' opinions on the restrictions on permission to work for asylum seekers.

Over the past 6 months the survey has received many submissions from women asylum seekers, who gave compelling testimonies of how these particular issues were affecting them:

'I feel the Home Office decision-making system is biased. It's more on how quick can we go through the pile than realistically looking at the issues. I am a victim of human trafficking (trafficking for sexual purposes) having left my country due to political reasons. Yet they (Home Office) didn't even tackle my trafficking issue all they were interested in was how quickly I could be deported?'

"Women who are raped will have the onus on them to 'prove' this has happened when shame is a big factor that prevents women from being available to give details of rape and sexual assault and my experience has been that they tend not to be believed by the immigration authorities'

'I been living the country for 6 years, my cousins looked after me the first 2 years, unfortunately they got tired of looking after an adult, since then I have been through hell, lived with a man who provided me with a roof, in return I had to sleep with him, he beaten me regularly, at times tried to suffocate me, called me racist names, spat at me, all

this because he knew that I cant go to the police with fear of being deported. He final chucked me out when he was tired of beating and raping me, after this I have gone from man to man just so that I can live and have a meal'

The dossiers can be downloaded from the Asylum Aid website (www.asylumaid.org.uk). Each dossier summarises the testimonies we received on the topic, illustrated by extracts from individual submissions, and refers readers to other sources of information and relevant campaigning actions.

Asylum Rights Watch is an ongoing project and dossiers summarising the responses received will continue to be produced on a regular basis. To submit a submission of evidence to inform our next dossier, click on the 'Asylum Rights Watch' link on the homepage of the Asylum Aid website (www.asylumaid.org.uk).

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Asylum Aid provides free legal advice and representation to asylum-seekers and refugees, and campaigns for their rights. We rely on the generosity of individuals to help us continue our work. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

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