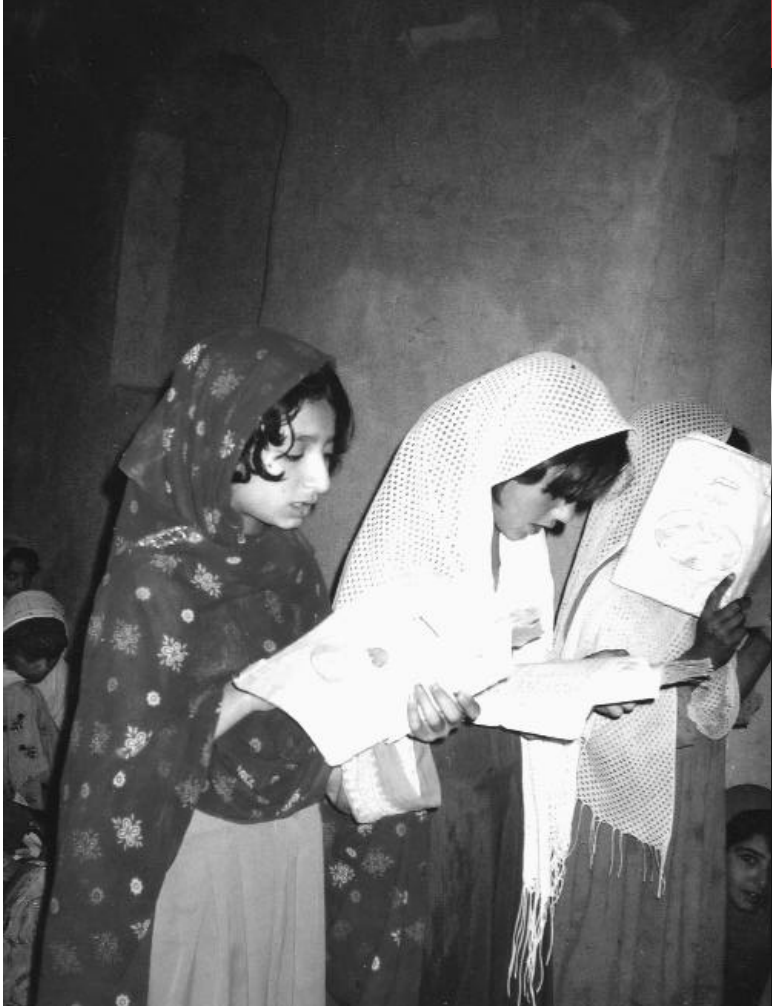




Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

ANNUAL REPORT 2000



MISSION STATEMENT

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children seeks to improve the lives of refugee women, children and adolescents through a vigorous program of advocacy and by acting as a technical resource. The Commission, founded in 1989 under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee, is the only organization in the United States dedicated solely to speaking out on behalf of women and children uprooted by armed conflict or persecution.

For more than ten years the Women's Commission has been bringing the needs and rights of refugee women and children to the attention of the international community through fact-finding missions overseas and through its roles as expert resource, advocate and technical advisor. Monitoring, fact finding and recording the situation of women and children uprooted by armed conflict or persecution, the Women's Commission has had a significant impact on policies and programs affecting these populations worldwide.

Although 80 percent of the world's 34 million refugees and internally displaced persons are women, children and adolescents, the particular rights and needs of these groups are inadequately addressed by policy makers and those who are mandated to provide protection and relief. Refugee women, children and adolescents are vulnerable to a range of dangers exacerbated by their gender and/or age.

The Women's Commission's strategy is to highlight issues of protection and care, advocate for positive change and show how sustainable improvements can be achieved. The Women's Commission enables refugee women and children and adolescents themselves to play critical roles in representing the refugee condition before varied audiences and promoting policy and programming changes.

WOMEN'S
COMMISSION
for refugee women & children





DEAR FRIENDS:

This year marked several milestones for the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. We helped to achieve a landmark Security Council Resolution at the United Nations. For the first time ever, this august body took up the issue of women and peace. The idea that the Security Council debate the concerns of women and girls in war zones was greeted with skepticism at first. But working in coalition with other nongovernmental organizations, we were able to convince the United Nations and governments to take up the matter, and to hear testimony of women from Somalia, Guatemala and Sierra Leone. The result was a resolution calling for more women in decision-making roles in conflict resolution and peace processes, special measures to protect against gender-based violence in wartime, and for all parties to respect the humanitarian nature of refugee camps and take into account the needs of women and girls in designing them. The Security Council agreed to "remain seized of the matter."

The Year 2000 was also the five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing; the Women's Commission brought together refugee and internally displaced women from around the world to consider what progress has been made and what more needs to be done to improve their lives and the lives of their families.

We launched the Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury Fund, for organizations providing reproductive health services for adolescents in refugee settings. It is named in honor of a woman who devoted much of her life to educating others about the importance of reproductive health.

Together with UNHCR, we issued the first report on adolescents affected by armed conflict, and initiated worldwide discussion on how to address the problems young people face. They are often expected to assume adult responsibilities, yet have no guidance or role models. They risk being forced into soldiering, sexual slavery and dangerous jobs.

As always, we focused on the power of refugee women and young people to identify priority concerns and contribute to solutions. We have been able to give them a voice at the highest levels of government, thanks to the enthusiastic support of so many. Thank you and we look forward to working with you in the coming years.

Mary Díaz
Executive Director

Kathleen Newland
Chair, Board of Directors

participation and protection



Refugee women face many challenges: in some ways, their particular protection needs – e.g., against sexual violence, access to resources and power – need to be addressed; in others, their efforts to survive and improve their families' lives need to be supported.

The Women's Commission works around the world to increase awareness and implementation of the United Nations guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, Protection and Care of Refugee Children, Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence and Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. We monitor NGOs and United Nations agencies, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and participate in meetings and conferences devoted to improving programming and protection efforts that are sensitive to the needs of women.

The Women's Commission strengthens the capacity of local women's networks and initiatives by making small grants to foster growth and advocacy. We support refugee women's participation in conferences, meetings and advocacy, providing opportunities for women and youth to attend and make presentations.

delegations to the field

As part of our ongoing project to promote better protection and services for refugee women and children, the Women's Commission dispatches assessment teams to war-affected locations around the world. In 2000, the Women's Commission undertook delegations to Rwanda, Burma and Thailand, Serbia and Montenegro, and Burundi. On return, delegations produce reports that are used to inform key players and to undertake advocacy.

RWANDA



Almost six years after the genocide in Rwanda in which more than 500,000 people were killed, the recovery from the disaster is being led by Rwanda's women. With women and girls making up the majority of the population, women are taking on leadership roles at all levels as the country takes steps to develop a broad-based civil society.

When the Women's Commission visited Rwanda in January 2000, the situation remained bleak. Some 370,000 families – nearly 1 in 5 Rwandans according to UNHCR figures – were still living under plastic sheeting in refugee-like conditions and more than 70 percent of the population was living in poverty. Sixty percent of women were illiterate and there were only 120 Rwandan doctors to serve the country's 8 million people. Millions of people remained displaced by the ongoing war in the region.



Despite these problems, women were becoming more visible at all levels of government. A new law enabled women to inherit property for the first time, and land reform legislation was being considered.

However, international support for local women's NGOs has been limited. The Women's Commission called on the international community to consolidate and enhance support, including in the areas of income generation, training and education.

The Women's Commission also called on the international community to include women in regional peacemaking, as they have strong community networks and experience in conflict resolution with their families and communities.

THAILAND AND BURMA

The impact of decades of military repression on the population of Burma has been devastating. Hundreds of thousands of Burmese have been displaced by the government's suppression of ethnic insurgencies and of the pro-democracy movement. Women and girls flee or are trafficked into Thailand to work in the sex industry, in factories or as domestic workers. HIV/AIDS has reached epidemic proportions inside Burma, and Burmese living in Thailand are being infected at an alarming rate. The decay – and willful destruction – of the educational system in Burma has created an increasingly illiterate population, without the tools necessary to participate in a modern society.

A Women's Commission delegation visited Thailand and Burma in March 2000. In both countries, refugee women identified their key needs as reproductive health services, education (for children and women) and income generation. Other problems, they told the delegation, included sexual and gender-based violence, lack of knowledge about health care and economic dependency. Many – probably the majority of – Burmese refugees in Thailand are not recognized as refugees, and therefore are vulnerable to forced repatriation or exploitation, and have little or no access to humanitarian assistance.

The delegation met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, general secretary of the National League for Democracy in Burma, and discussed with her the provision of humanitarian assistance within Burma.





SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO



The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) hosts the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons in Europe. More than 700,000 refugees and internally displaced people from Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo struggle to survive in collective centers or with host families.

When the Women's Commission visited the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia it found that while the international community was providing important humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons, refugee and internally displaced communities faced many obstacles, from lack of shelter to increased domestic violence, to paucity of education or other opportunities. Tens of thousands of people continue to need assistance in the areas of food, shelter, health care, education and psychological and social services. The long-term challenge, the delegation reported, is to find durable solutions for the families and individuals who fled their homes during the Balkan wars and to build a country and region that respect ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, as well as gender equality. The international community should involve women's organizations in this work.

BURUNDI



The conflict in Burundi has lasted for more than 30 years, with the most recent crisis developing in 1993. An estimated half million people have been displaced within Burundi, and now live in displacement camps or with friends or relatives, or struggle to survive from day to day in the hills and forests. In August 2000, shortly before a Women's Commission delegation visited in October, a peace agreement had been signed by most, but significantly not all, parties to the conflict.

Women play an important role in Burundi's fledgling peace process, but feel insufficiently represented at the negotiating table, despite their involvement in a multitude of projects promoting peace and reconciliation at the grassroots level. The Women's Commission delegation pushed for greater participation of women in the negotiations, along with recognition of their contributions to peace. There is a critical need to support local Burundian NGOs which provide much-needed peace and reconciliation programs, including multi-ethnic income generation projects.

In its delegation report, the Women's Commission recommended that the UN strengthen its presence in Burundi and demonstrate leadership in tackling internal displacement. The UN's special coordinator for the displaced visited Burundi two months after the Women's Commission delegation, and subsequently the UN appointed a new coordinator for Burundi and UNHCR appointed an emergency coordinator for the Democratic Republic of Congo/Burundi situation.

Note: Copies of delegation reports are available on our website at www.womenscommission.org

LET'S RECONCILE!

Take 50 women from 10 provinces, bring them to Bujumbura and train them in conflict resolution techniques. Send them home to their communities to inform their female friends and neighbors about peace and reconciliation. Then ask those women in turn to spread the word to more distant communes...

In a country where accurate information may be hard to come by, networks like Dushirehamwe provide a simple formula for communication and hope. This home-grown support group, whose name means "Let's Reconcile!", reaches an estimated 7,500 women of all ethnicities across Burundi.

Dushirehamwe's discussion groups debate women's concerns such as family planning and health education, as well as confront difficult ethnic issues and the ongoing peace process.

But the network also encourages women to work together to overcome their differences. One group in Gatumba, to the west of Bujumbura, is made up of women who have all been displaced by the ongoing civil war – but for different reasons.

"The Tutsi didn't want to understand the Hutu, the Hutu didn't want to understand the Tutsi," said Victoire Ciza, a Dushirehamwe member. "We decided to find some work together. We got some land and now we work in the field in our group, talking and discussing as we do so."

Once a month Victoire travels to Bujumbura to gather the latest news on the Arusha peace process.

"To see if there is any message of peace," she explained. "Then I bring what they say back. And if necessary I go back with what the women say."



local capacities

The Women's Commission's two-year local capacities project supports building the capacity of formal and informal women's groups through strengthening linkages with nongovernmental, UN and other humanitarian assistance agencies in the field. In 2000, the Women's Commission provided technical expertise and supported initiatives in Sierra Leone/Guinea, Pakistan/Afghanistan, Sudan and Azerbaijan.

Through providing small grants to selected women's groups and working with international assistance agencies to identify and include the input of local groups, the Women's Commission has overseen and nurtured linkages among several organizations. Small grants were used to foster links through activities such as income generation (soap making and tailoring) in Sudan, construction projects in Sierra Leone, a counseling program for Afghan refugee women in Pakistan and legal rights training for internally displaced women in Azerbaijan.



technical advisor on gender project – Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been in crisis for more than 20 years, with millions of people seeking refuge in neighboring countries (primarily Pakistan and Iran) or displaced within Afghanistan. Responding to requests from agencies working in the region, which recognized the need for better ways to reach and engage Afghans, especially women, the Women's Commission established a Technical Advisor on Gender project for Afghan refugees in 2000. The technical advisor, based in Peshawar, Pakistan, has quickly become a key resource for the local humanitarian community and for agencies and individuals new to the Afghan situation.

Activities of the Afghanistan project in 2000 included:

- Collecting and disseminating to the humanitarian community and policy makers data from field visits to Afghanistan (Herat and Kabul) that reflects the different components of the population – women and men, adolescents and children.
- Performing gender-based analysis of critical incidents, such as the repatriation of refugees from Iran.
- Participating in the Taliban Edicts Task Force, which was formed in response to Taliban edicts banning women from working. The Task Force commissioned the technical advisor to produce a report.
- Training Afghan women and NGO staff in the Dari language on gender and human rights, and hosting a workshop on media skills for Afghan women working in NGOs and UN agencies to help them craft their own messages.
- Exchanging information on gender programs with more than 60 gender focal persons in the aid community. This is a cadre of program staff who work in international and local NGOs in Pakistan and Afghanistan and are responsible for integrating gender in their organizations' programs.
- Establishing the largest resource center in Peshawar on gender and women's rights, with a library containing some 200 publications. The project receives requests for information from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.



BEIJING PLUS FIVE:
ASSESSING PROGRESS
FOR WOMEN



Caritas Sebushahu, a refugee from Burundi who lives in a refugee camp in Tanzania, whom the Women's Commission sponsored to attend the Beijing Plus Five Conference, wrote:

[The conference] gave me hope, as well as my compatriot refugees in general and refugee women in particular, that the world around us is out to share the plight of women. ...My attending Beijing Plus 5 broadened my mind and I feel I am in a position to advocate strongly for women's and girls' rights and to promote gender equality.... The idea of engendering the peace process in the case of Burundi is connected to the Beijing Plus 5 demand to politicians to include women (refugees and displaced) in peace negotiations as valuable partners in decision-making. When I briefed women refugees about Beijing Plus 5, they advised that I represent them in the Arusha Peace Talks (July and August, 2000) where I felt really comfortable sharing and discussing issues related to gender with Burundian women. Beijing Plus 5 gave me a lot of inspiration.

giving a greater voice to refugee women

For five days in June 2000, thousands of women (and men) gathered at United Nations headquarters in New York for a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Women 2000: Gender, Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century. Commonly referred to as Beijing Plus 5, the session assessed progress made in the five years since the Fourth UN Conference on Women.

During the conference, the Women's Commission raised the profile of refugee concerns. With support from several organizations, the Commission hosted a daily Caucus on Uprooted Women, where attendees – including refugees – from more than 25 countries produced a Caucus statement. The statement emphasized that states and other actors must address the needs of internally displaced women, the impact of long-term displacement and sexual violence.

Refugee women from Burundi, Bhutan and Uganda attended the conference with support from the Women's Commission. They advocated for their particular concerns and networked with other advocates.

The Women's Commission hosted panels on internally displaced persons and on gender and the reconstruction of Southeastern Europe. Both panels had presentations by refugee women and adolescents, senior UN and governmental representatives, and nongovernmental organizations. The Women's Commission collaborated with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on a panel featuring three women from conflict areas, and Mary Diaz, executive director of the Women's Commission, chaired a UNHCR-sponsored panel featuring the UNHCR senior coordinator for refugee women and gender equality, Joyce Mends Cole, who is a former Women's Commission board member.



EXAMINING THE ROLE OF
WOMEN IN THE BALKANS

Collaborating with the Urgent Action Fund and Kvinna Til Kvinna (a Swedish foundation), the Women's Commission conducted a *Gender Audit of Southeastern Europe*. The report found that the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) had generally failed to "mainstream" gender into its own administration and the transitional government of Kosovo. This had undermined both the capacity of Kosovar women's groups and their willingness to work with UNMIK.

GIVING REFUGEE WOMEN A
VOICE AT UNHCR'S
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING

The Women's Commission co-sponsored a presentation at the Executive Committee meeting of the UNHCR in Geneva in October. Five women – from Colombia, Burma, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Kosovo – shared their stories of forced exile, internal displacement and return, and spoke about the need to reduce sexual and gender-based violence and improve women's access to health care in refugee-impacted areas. In her closing remarks at the conference, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata recognized the event, saying: "The roundtable discussion was a welcome break from the formality of the proceedings in this room. By all accounts, the frank and refreshing exchange with refugee women was a highlight of this session, as the voices of refugees have been missing from our deliberations. I encourage you to retain and build upon these initiatives."

WOMEN, PEACE AND
SECURITY: PUTTING
PRESSURE ON THE UN
SECURITY COUNCIL

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children participated in a historic session of the United Nations Security Council on women, peace and security in October. During a special session open to a few nongovernmental organizations, the NGO Group on Women and International Peace and Security, of which the Women's Commission is a member, made a statement. The Group distributed a list of recommendations to all the governments participating in the session

The Council also heard testimonies from prominent women from war-affected countries, including Sierra Leone and Somalia, and put questions to experts from humanitarian and human rights organizations.

On the following two days, Council members held an open session, at which government representatives and UN agency staff made statements about women in war. Security Council resolution 1325, adopted unanimously on October 31, calls upon all parties to armed conflict to fully respect international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls – especially civilians – and to take special measures to ensure their protection and particular needs. It recognizes the need to respect the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps and settlements, and the need to take into account gender considerations there, as well as in planning for disarmament,

WOMEN'S COMMISSION
JOINS UN GLOBAL APPEAL
FOR RELIEF

demobilization and reintegration. The Women's Commission is a member of a committee established to monitor implementation of resolution 1325.

The Women's Commission participated in the United Nations Consolidated Interagency Appeals for 2001, which launched a global appeal for \$2.26 billion for humanitarian relief under the theme of "Women and War." The Women's Commission produced a fact sheet entitled *Women and War*, and sponsored two women, from Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, to speak. Women's Commission founder and board member Liv Ullmann was a featured speaker at the launch, as was UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

LINKING HUMANITARIAN
ASSISTANCE WITH PEACE
BUILDING IN SIERRA
LEONE: A WOMAN'S
PERSPECTIVE

The decade-long war in Sierra Leone has been a war against women. We have been deliberately and specifically targeted for crimes such as rape, gang rape and other forms of sexual violence...

Some of my sisters at the Women's Forum and I...are involved in sub-regional and regional peace initiatives...We contributed to discussions that led to the Lome Peace Accord, even though we were under-represented at the negotiations...

In Guinea, I met a lot of Sierra Leonean women...working as prostitutes to survive...Twenty-one-year-old Marie's whole family was killed in an arson attack by the rebels...She went to a camp in Gueckedou where she waited in vain for verification (as a refugee) for eight weeks. In a desperate need for food and shelter, she resorted to prostitution... Staff of humanitarian agencies... acknowledged the problem but said because of the shortage of resources they did not have the capacity to meet the protection challenges they face in a timely and systematic manner.

These protection practices and shortage of resources are perpetuating women's vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. The protection standard is so low in much of Africa that one cannot help comparing it with protection standards in other places, such as Kosovo. The disparity in the allocation of funds... raises serious questions about the underlying principles of humanitarianism... Furthermore, the allocation of adequate resources for skills training, micro-credit enterprises and tools for agriculture... will give the women a second chance to rebuild their lives.

Let me make it clear that I am not advocating for the establishment of a humanitarian welfare system that promotes the culture of dependency and consequently exacerbates donor fatigue. I am talking about humanitarian assistance that alleviates socio-economic burdens as well as promotes self-reliance for women.

To conclude, humanitarian assistance to women and local organizations is an investment in peace building, democracy and the future of Sierra Leone.

Binta Mansaray, Researcher and
Consultant on Sexual and Gender-Based
Violence, speaking at the launch of the
UN Consolidated Appeal for
Humanitarian Relief, October 2000



RAISING THE VOICES OF
ADOLESCENTS AFFECTED
BY WAR



children and adolescents

Refugee children and adolescents comprise about half of refugees and displaced persons worldwide. The Women's Commission continues to bring refugee children's and adolescents' issues and concerns, along with recommended solutions, to the attention of governments, UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations and others. We work to support policy changes and more effective programs that will better protect children and adolescents affected by armed conflict and provide them with the assistance and protection they need, including appropriate medical care and access to educational, recreational and income generating activities.

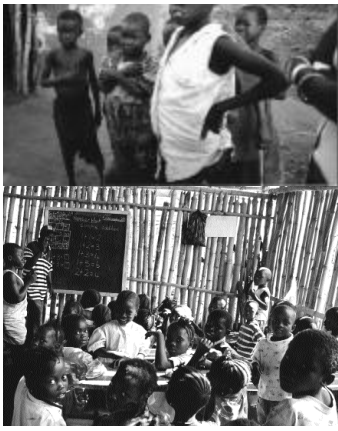
"Adolescents are the underserved of the underserved," one expert told the Women's Commission. Despite increased international attention to the plight of war-affected children, adolescents, who are at a critical stage of development, have been largely left behind.

Untapped Potential: Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict, A review of programs and policies, a Women's Commission study released in January 2000, found that adolescents left without sufficient support are placed at greater risk of distinct rights violations. It also asserted that the opinions of adolescents are ignored when decisions are made that affect their lives.

Based on the study's results, the Women's Commission undertook an international campaign to increase targeted attention to adolescents uprooted from their homes and advocated on behalf of its findings to nongovernmental, United Nations, World Bank and local and national government policy-makers, as well as the public at large. In particular, the Women's Commission is advocating that adolescents need to be active participants in the creation of their futures and that increased adolescent-specific responses in humanitarian assistance operations are needed.

In mid-2000, the Children and Adolescents Project completed field-based research with, and for, adolescents in Kosovo, one of four sites being investigated as part of our international campaign to increase services and protection for adolescents fleeing war and persecution. The Women's Commission worked with the Kosovar Youth Council (KYC), and in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee, on the project "Promoting the Protection and Capacities of Kosovo's Youth" to identify the range of problems facing young people, as well as solutions to these problems. Women's Commission staff mobilized dozens of adolescents and adult community members – Albanian, Egyptian, Serb and Bosniak – in a number of sites, to interview hundreds of their peers.

The senior coordinator of the Women's Commission's Children and Adolescents Project, the president of the KYC and two Kosovar adolescents presented the preliminary findings of the study at the first International Conference on War-Affected Children, hosted by the Canadian government in Winnipeg, Canada in September 2000.



SECURITY COUNCIL
ADDRESSES CHILDREN IN
ARMED CONFLICT

Our research work in Kosova was used as one of five case studies considered at the International Conference on War-Affected Children in Winnipeg, Canada. As one of the researchers, I was able to attend with the Women's Commission, and I had an opportunity, along with other young people, to speak with decision-makers. After speaking with representatives of the Canadian government about children and adolescents in Kosova, the Canadian government announced \$10 million (Canadian) to be spent for education initiatives in Kosova. I was very happy to have this opportunity to speak to international officials, and decision-makers must continue to involve youth in their decisions about children and adolescents affected by war and other problems.

Hekuran Soba, Gjakova, Kosovo, adolescent researcher and university student, who attended the Winnipeg Conference in September 2000 at the age of 18.

Advocacy efforts resulting from these endeavors have already begun to bear fruit for adolescents in the region. Those involved in the project as researchers are equipped to speak and act on issues concerning them and their peers, and they have activated their communities to consider the issues. Women's Commission activities have also helped to influence and encourage positive steps at policy and program levels, including securing significant funding for programming for young people over the next two years. Some of the projects youth have designed, won funding for and undertaken are an anti-hate graffiti project, an anti-violence poster and brochure project, and an event for orphaned children.

In July, the Women's Commission was a member of a coalition of eight NGOs invited to brief the United Nations Security Council prior to a special session on children and armed conflict. Women's Commission executive director Mary Diaz presented a coalition statement entitled "From Words to Action" that called on the Security Council to establish concrete measures to back up UN pledges to protect child victims of war. The Women's Commission worked with other NGOs to establish an ongoing consultative process with the Security Council on these issues. The United Nations Secretary-General's report on children in armed conflict to the Security Council expressly identified war-affected adolescents as a key problem area and singled out the Women's Commission document, *Untapped Potential: Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict*.



NGO WORKING GROUP ON
CHILDREN IN ARMED
CONFLICT



The Women's Commission continued to chair the NGO Committee on UNICEF, Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict. Under the leadership of the Women's Commission, the sub-working group collaborated with two international working groups on a joint statement on refugee children and adolescents to the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The statement emphasized the issues of meeting adolescents' protection and assistance needs, ensuring protection and services for refugee and displaced girls, domestic violence and the neglect of child concerns.

As the chair of the sub-working group, the Women's Commission co-hosted a consultation on children in armed conflict in March at the United Nations. This consultation brought together more than 40 representatives of NGOs from around the world, together with UN agencies and UN country representatives, to focus on implementation of Security Council Resolution 1261 on the protection of children affected by conflict. A report from the consultation, *Closing the Gap between Words and Action: Child protection through implementation of Security Council Resolution 1261*, with recommendations to the Security Council for action on behalf of war-affected children, was submitted to various United Nations agencies, international organizations, country missions to the UN, government agencies working on children's issues, and local and international NGOs.

At the International Conference on War-affected Children in Winnipeg the Women's Commission, as chair of the working group, co-organized and co-hosted an NGO meeting the day before the experts meeting began. More than 75 NGO delegates from around the world worked together to identify priorities for and beyond the Winnipeg conference. NGOs produced an NGO Action Plan, *Peace is Every Child's Right*, which was acknowledged as the strongest and most specific proposal for action that came out of the conference.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL ON
CHILDREN IN ARMED
CONFLICT

Women's Commission staff worked with the Leadership Council on Children in Armed Conflict to follow up its November 1999 delegation to northern Uganda with a report, *Our Children are Missing*, and advocacy in New York and Washington, DC with NGO, government and UN policy-makers. The Leadership Council also brought Angelina Atyam, co-founder of the Concerned Parents' Association of northern Uganda, to the United States in April 2000 to speak at its luncheon in New York City about the children held in captivity by the Lord's Resistance Army, including her daughter. United States Ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke also spoke at the luncheon. Women's Commission staff accompanied Ms. Atyam to meetings with high-level UN, NGO, World Bank and US government policy-makers in New York and Washington, DC, as well as to the Democratic National Committee dinner where Ms. Atyam spoke to President Clinton, Hillary Clinton, Vice President Gore and Mrs. Gore about the abducted children.

CHILDREN OF WAR,
CHILDREN OF HOPE



Children of War, Children of Hope, an exhibition of drawings by refugee children and photographs from Angola, Azerbaijan, Burma, Cambodia, Kosovo, Rwanda and Sierra Leone traveled to ArtShare in Los Angeles, California, a downtown gallery that is used largely for educational programs with inner city youth. The exhibit was shown during the Season of Non-Violence in February and March 2000. Women's Commission staff worked with ArtShare to open and show the exhibit and to organize a series of workshops for high school students and teachers to educate them about children in war situations.

A selection of the *Children of War, Children of Hope* photos and drawings was also displayed at a reception during the annual session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The head of the US delegation to the Commission wrote: "By providing us with material on your own work, you helped promote greater understanding among both delegations and leading nongovernmental and international organizations. Your work challenged them to think about what their countries could do to empower youth prior to the General Assembly's Special Session for Children in the fall of 2001. It also inspired my own work."

ABDUCTED CHILDREN
FROM NORTHERN UGANDA



The Women's Commission is continuing its advocacy on behalf of the abducted children of Northern Uganda, including raising this issue in the media; meeting with State Department and other government, UN and NGO officials; supporting local organizations like the Concerned Parents' Association; and giving support to a delegation to the area by the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Women's Commission has taken the lead to form and coordinate an informal NGO coalition known as the Friends of the War-affected Children of Northern Uganda. This group is demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the abducted children from Northern Uganda and a halt to further abductions. It also acts to raise awareness about the situation for children in Northern Uganda in order to positively affect the humanitarian situation in the internally displaced persons camps in Northern Uganda; and supporting the peace processes underway.

EDUCATION IN
EMERGENCIES



The Women's Commission worked with the International Rescue Committee to conduct a global study on the provision of education to refugees, internally displaced persons and individuals fleeing armed conflict. Initial observations and findings identified some of the major themes and challenges in this area. This work, and the work that will follow, will provide donors, nongovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, communities affected by emergencies and other interested individuals and organizations with a global framework for the provision of education in emergencies. The Women's Commission participated in the launch of the Network on Education in Emergencies, a UN and NGO group that will work together to promote primary and secondary education.



DETENTION OF WOMEN
AND CHILDREN SEEKING
ASYLUM

CHANGING THE LAW ON
WOMEN AND CHILDREN
ASYLUM SEEKERS



asylum and detention

Through its Detention and Asylum Project, the Women's Commission continued to advocate for comprehensive reform of United States detention and asylum policy. The Women's Commission has played a pivotal role in enhancing public awareness of the harsh treatment often experienced by women and children seeking asylum in the United States. Many are incarcerated in inhumane conditions, denied legal representation and other services, and forced through the asylum system without adequate consideration of their asylum claims. As a result, some asylum seekers may be returned to their homelands to face further human rights abuses. Such rights violations include abuses that specifically target women and children: rape, honor killings, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, forced prostitution, recruitment as child soldiers and child labor.

In October 2000, the Women's Commission released its report, *Behind Locked Doors: Abuse of Refugee Women in the Krome Detention Center*, documenting widespread sexual, physical and emotional abuse of women in the custody of the Miami District of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. This report received widespread media coverage and helped encourage a high-level investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice into conditions of confinement in the Krome facility. The Women's Commission has continued to advocate for release of the women or placement in an appropriate alternative to detention.

Throughout the year, the Women's Commission played a leading role in developing legislation to mandate changes in U.S. detention and asylum policy. This resulted in introduction of the "Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act" by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) in the Fall.

The Women's Commission also helped coordinate a broad coalition that successfully persuaded former Attorney General Janet Reno to overturn a decision by the Department of Justice Board of Immigration Appeals that denied asylum to a victim of domestic violence, despite the failure of the Guatemalan government to protect her from her husband. If this decision had been left standing, it would have represented a significant setback to the evolution of asylum jurisprudence enhancing protection of victims of gender persecution.

Finally, the Women's Commission built on the national debate over the case of Elian Gonzalez to highlight the critical issues confronting unaccompanied children asylum seekers in the United States, who number almost 5,000 a year. This included submitting an amicus brief to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals that did not take a position on the Gonzalez case but argued for the right of children to seek asylum under both U.S. and international law.

Women's Commission staff made presentations about the critical issues facing women and children asylum seekers in numerous forums, including meetings and conferences sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and at several universities.

The Women's Commission's work on these issues received media coverage in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsday*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Miami Herald*, *USA Today*, *The Houston Chronicle*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and numerous other newspapers. Commission staff were also interviewed on CNN, CBS and the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer.



Marta (a pseudonym) is an asylum seeker from Guatemala. She was a forensics investigator and archeologist with the Guatemala Truth Commission and was assigned to look at sexual violence against women. In 1988, she reports, she herself was drugged, kidnapped, tortured and raped repeatedly by members of the Guatemalan military. After she shared her own story with the Truth Commission, she received death threats and was kidnapped. When she fled her country, Marta was apprehended by the INS at the Miami Airport, because it was discovered that she had overstayed her tourist visa on a prior visit to the United States by two days.

Marta reported that when she was taken to Krome it reminded her of her kidnapping in Guatemala... She noted in an affidavit "...[W]hile at the Miami airport, the small authorities that handled my case made me feel fear and gave me the treatment that you would only expect in a Soviet country or from SS officers in the time of World War II." Despite Marta's strong asylum claim, Miami Airport officials told her she was crazy to ask for asylum and harassed and intimidated her.

Marta reported that these abuses continued once she was at Krome. She told the Women's Commission: "The women who are more attractive get better treatment by the guards. Some women will give sex for favors." She also reported the terror of seeing fellow detainees packed up and moved out in the middle of the night.

In her affidavit, Marta wrote: "It is unavoidable at Krome to be in constant fear, behind locked doors, guards with radios, so many different orders, the unknown of your next stage, being with inmates of so many different backgrounds – cultural, moral, ethical – the sadness, the worrying, the anger, the fear that is present in everyone secluded there became contagious. It is a hard time, with only the hope that in this country justice prevails and human rights are a strong issue."

reproductive health project

The Women's Commission convenes the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium (RHRC) which encourages increased reproductive health services – family planning, HIV/AIDS/STDs, sexual and gender-based violence, and safe motherhood, including emergency obstetrics – in refugee and internally displaced settings. The seven members of the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium are the American Refugee Committee, CARE, Columbia University School of Public Health, International Rescue Committee, John Snow Research and Training Institute, Marie Stopes International and the Women's Commission. Recognizing the important work of local agencies, the Commission provides grants, technical assistance and other support for such groups.

reproductive health for refugees consortium

Research Conference 2000: Findings on Reproductive Health of Refugees and Displaced Populations brought together some of the world's foremost reproductive health care experts, along with refugees and internally displaced persons working in the field, to present new research on topics as diverse as HIV/AIDS, family planning, safe motherhood and sexual violence in refugee settings.

Organized by the Women's Commission and Columbia University under the auspices of the Consortium, the December conference was convened as a forum for refugee assistance agencies, researchers, policy makers and donors to share their findings from the field.

Research findings revealed that while there has been an increase in reproductive health services for refugees over the past seven years, there is an acute and continuing need for basic reproductive health care for populations in crisis throughout the world.

Conference 2000 represented an important milestone in the reproductive health for refugees movement as an occasion for practitioners to share applied research, program findings and data to improve reproductive health programs serving populations in crisis.

GLOBAL CONFERENCE



NEW INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH FOR REFUGEES



The Women's Commission and the International Rescue Committee, on behalf of the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium, began an initiative in 2000 to improve international and local capacity to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) among refugee and internally displaced populations. Project results will include a series of tools to assess, evaluate and monitor responses to SGBV – rape and sexual assault, family and intimate partner violence, trafficking of women and female genital mutilation – in refugee and internally displaced settings.



In an effort to avert maternal death and disability among war-affected populations, the RHRC began an initiative to address the critical emergency obstetric care needs of refugee and displaced women. The project advocates for increased access for refugee women to emergency obstetric services and for an improvement of such services.

Note: More information on the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium, including the conference proceedings, can be found at www.rhrc.org

partnerships in the field

The Women's Commission continued to provide grants and technical support to local NGOs in Thailand, Lebanon and Tanzania to expand and strengthen their reproductive health services.

The Mae Tao Clinic in Thailand provides health services for Burmese refugees and displaced persons in Thailand and Burma. Association Najdeh provides reproductive health educational workshops in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, focusing on family planning, maternal care and STD/HIV prevention. The Tanzanian Red Cross provides reproductive health education to adolescent refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi.

eleanor bellows pillsbury fund

The Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury Fund was founded in 2000 by Barbara and Henry Pillsbury, Philip Pillsbury and the Women's Commission to address the specific and many reproductive health needs of refugee adolescents. The Fund is in honor of Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury, who was president of the Planned Parenthood Foundation of America and vice president of the International Planned Parenthood Federation. Ms Pillsbury played a pivotal role in the fight for technical advancement and funding for reproductive health services in the United States and around the world.

Teenage refugees are the least likely of all displaced persons to have available reproductive health services and, for a variety of reasons, are typically unwilling to access such services when they do exist. Meanwhile, they are perhaps the most at risk of abuses such as sexual violence, HIV/AIDS and forced marriage. The EBP Fund addresses these critical concerns and raises awareness of the need for others to do the same.



ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
AMONG PALESTINIAN
REFUGEES

It is estimated that, around the world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. In refugee and IDP settings, where women and children comprise as much as 80 percent of the population, the threat of violence may be even greater. Anecdotal reports suggest that domestic violence is an increasing problem among families where post-war tensions remain high and resources remain insufficient.

The Women's Commission initiated a three-year sub-grant to the local NGO Association Najdeh to address the significant problem of domestic violence among Palestinian refugees living in and around 10 refugee camps in Lebanon.

In order to learn more about the communities' knowledge, attitudes and practices related to domestic violence, the project will begin with the implementation of a survey. The findings from the survey will be used to further train Association Najdeh staff in domestic violence intervention and referral and design project activities. The Project will also include conducting community education on domestic violence, establishing counseling services, conducting workshops on domestic violence awareness and conflict resolution skills.

public education and outreach

At the annual Voices of Courage awards luncheon in June, the Women's Commission honored the Colombia Children's Movement for Peace, Al Jana/Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts from Lebanon and the Kitgum District Concerned Women's Association from Uganda for their work with refugee and displaced children. *MarieClaire* magazine received an award for its efforts to bring critical issues affecting refugees and asylum seekers to public attention. Awards were presented by supermodel Iman and internationally acclaimed singer Angelique Kidjo. Actor Cherry Jones hosted the luncheon.

VOICES OF COURAGE
AWARDS LUNCHEON



TAKING ADVOCACY
MESSAGES TO CAPITOL
HILL

Mary Diaz moderated a Congressional briefing in March aimed at drawing attention to the continuing plight of children affected by armed conflict in Sierra Leone. In her comments, she said that women, adolescents and children have been the primary targets of this war and that atrocities such as child abductions and rape are continuing.

During the Women's Commission's annual advocacy day in Washington, DC in February, some 30 staff, board members and colleagues from refugee and human rights organizations met with Congressional and Administration staff on Capitol Hill, as well as staff at the World Bank and Department of State, to discuss adolescent refugees, the situation in Rwanda and Colombia, and conditions for asylum seekers in the United States. During the year, staff, board and delegation members held individual meetings on Capitol Hill and with the Administration on a variety of topics.

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We would like to thank the many interns, volunteers and consultants who assisted the Women's Commission in 2000.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2000

The following is a summary of the financial operations of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children for fiscal year 2000 (October 1, 1999 – September 30, 2000). This summary is based upon figures from the accounts and records prepared by the International Rescue Committee, which is classified as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is thus qualified for charitable contribution deductions. An independent audit of IRC's accounts, including those of the Women's Commission, is available upon request.

REVENUE	Amount
Foundation	1,191,621
Government	153,798
United Nations	39,038
Individual Contributions	1,018,517
Special Events	267,771
Total Revenue	2,670,745
EXPENSES	
Advocacy Project	486,785
Protection & Participation Project	215,890
Reproductive Health Project	236,493
Asylum & Detention Project	129,293
Public Education Project	138,250
Children & Adolescent Study Project	93,152
Kosovo Project	204,672
Fundraising Project	196,378
Total Expenses	1,700,913
Surplus	969,832
Beginning Fund Balance	489,124
Ending Fund Balance	1,458,956

NOTE: The surplus for FY2000 of \$969,832 includes \$460,000 multi-year grants restricted for project use. The beginning fund balance of \$489,125 of the 12 months actual includes \$118,034 from foundation and private grants, \$41,025 from the Founders Fund, and \$330,066 from annual luncheon and Emerging Market Children's Charitable Ball income, board donations, major donors and membership donations.

DONORS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2000

October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2000

Adobe
American Cathedral in Paris
American Jewish World Service
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Anonymous
AXA Foundation
The Bank of New York
BankersTrust
Blackstone Group
Bloomberg News
Blumenthal Partners
BNP Paribas
Callahan Co.
Chase Manhattan Bank
Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health
Heilbrunn Center for Population and Family Health
Evercore Partners
Felix & Elizabeth Rohatyn Foundation
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The German Marshall Fund of the United States
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Hillsdale Fund
The J.M. Kaplan Fund, Inc.
J.P. Morgan & Co., Inc.
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Linden Productions
Lostand Foundation
The Luce and James Reiss Charitable Fund
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Milestone Capital Management
The Minneapolis Foundation
Morgan Stanley & Co., Inc.
MTS Travel Management Group
Nathan Cummings Foundation
National Basketball Players Association
The Niagara Trust
Norman Foundation
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Parlour Design
Patricia Evert Productions
The Paul and Edith Babson Foundation
Pittman Family Foundation
The Riverside Church
Shaler Adams Foundation
Silver Mountain Foundation for the Arts
Step Up Women's Network
Tides Foundation
United Nations Children's Fund
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
United Nations Population Fund
United States Department of State,
Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
United Way of Tri-State
USA for UNHCR
West End Collegiate Church
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
The Worth Collection

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Individual Contributions

For information on making individual donations, including stock gifts, please contact Ellen Jorgensen, director of development, at 212. 551. 3115 or ellen@womenscommission.org. You can also visit our website at www.womenscommission.org

Send your tax-deductible contributions to:

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor
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Providing for the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children in your estate will enhance our ability to provide a voice for refugee women and children for years to come. You can remember the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children in your will. Or you can name us as a beneficiary of your life insurance, living trust or qualified retirement plan. The legal designation is Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children/International Rescue Committee, Inc., a New York charitable corporation located at 122 East 42nd Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10168-1289.

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