



Research Conference Reveals Great Progress in Reproductive Health for Refugees, but Huge Gaps Remain

Among Afghan refugees surveyed in camps in Pakistan, pregnancy and other reproductive health problems were the leading causes of death. A study of Burmese migrant workers on the Thai/Burma border revealed that very few Burmese women had ever seen a condom.

These remarkable findings were among the presentations at Research Conference 2000: Findings on Reproductive Health of Refugees and Displaced Populations, held in Washington, D.C. last December and hosted by the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium. The conference brought together some of the world's foremost reproductive health care experts to present new research on topics as diverse as HIV/AIDS, family planning, safe motherhood and sexual violence in refugee settings.

Research Conference 2000 was convened as a forum for refugee assistance agencies, researchers, policy makers and donors to share their findings from the field. Some 250 delegates from nearly 30 countries heard presentations from approximately 40 different refugee settings, indicating the extraordinary interest and desire for information in this evolving field.

In 1993 a Women's Commission survey found that reproductive health was a low priority for most refugee relief agencies and donors. Assessment teams visited eight refugee sites that year and found little or no provision of reproductive health care. Many relief agency staff assumed that refugees did not want reproductive health care or thought that such services would be culturally inappropriate. The teams found very little data on refugee needs and priorities or on how these services could be appropriately offered to refugees and displaced people.

Seven years later, Conference 2000 research findings revealed an increase in refugee health services for refugees, while still emphasizing the acute need for basic reproductive health care for populations in crisis throughout the world.

Several presentations showed that refugees are fully capable and highly interested in participating in the *(continued on page 6)*

Women's Commission Undertakes Review of UNHCR Policy and Guidelines on Refugee Women



Internally displaced girl in Eritrea fetching water for her family.

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Ten years ago, UNHCR responded to reports of sexual violence, discrimination in food distribution, lack of reproductive health services and other concerns for refugee women by introducing its Policy on Refugee Women and Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women. Over the years, the Women's Commission has worked to encourage the implementation of the Guidelines in a variety of settings. This includes delegation visits and a program (1996-97) encouraging awareness among field-based staff of UNHCR and its implementing partners.

To commemorate the 10-year anniversary, the Women's Commission has embarked on a year-long review of UNHCR's approach and effectiveness in implementing the policy and guidelines towards meeting the needs of refugee women and girls. The review will reach beyond a focus on women and girls by looking at the extent to which UNHCR is considering the needs of *(continued on page 2)*

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Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

An independent organization formed with the assistance of the International Rescue Committee to advocate for the solution of problems affecting refugee women and children.

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UNHCR Review

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women and men, girls and boys (gender perspectives) in its programs and policies.

The review covers both field (local and regional) and headquarters initiatives and perspectives. In March 2001 the review team, led by Dr. Patricia Weiss Fagen, completed the first field mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia. In both countries challenges include providing protection and assistance to refugees, returnees and the internally displaced in an environment of substantial government control. The reach of government includes both policy development and assistance delivery. For example, in Ethiopia the government is responsible for providing health care and protection in refugee camps, and in Eritrea a national body coordinates and implements assistance delivery to the internally displaced who are scattered in some 28 camps.

Other field visits are scheduled for Pakistan, Azerbaijan and Zambia. Preliminary findings, which will acknowledge advances made by UNHCR, highlight gaps and recommend ways to strengthen gender policy and programming, will be presented at the UNHCR Executive Committee meetings in Geneva in October 2001. A series of consultations to share and discuss the findings with UNHCR and implementing partners is planned for Nairobi, New York, Geneva, Washington, D.C. and Ottawa. The initiative has strong support from the US Department of State's Bureau for Population Refugees and Migration, Canadian International Development Agency and UNHCR. Representatives of these agencies are actively participating in and otherwise supporting the Women's Commission's missions and research.

For more information, visit www.womenscommission.org.

Recognizing the Role of Women in Peacemaking

International Women's Day, March 8th, was celebrated this year with the theme, "Women, Peace and Security." Events at the United Nations in New York highlighted the important gains made under Security Council Resolution 1325, which was adopted unanimously last year after an special session of the United Nations.

Maha Muna, deputy director, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, chaired a panel that included UNIFEM executive director Noleen Heyzer, Funmi Alonisakin from the office of the Secretary General's Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, and Iliriana Loxha of the Kosovo-based women's organization, Motrat Qiriazzi (see profile, page 3). Panelists discussed follow-up to the resolution, including training of peacekeepers on women and children's rights, projects to promote protection for refugee women and girls and the launch of PeaceWomen.org, a one-stop site for information, contacts and research on women and peace.

by Mary Diaz, Executive Director



Iliriana Loxha

A historic meeting to set an agenda for children takes place this September at the United Nations as heads of state gather to set an agenda for improving the lives of children. In the run-up to this Special Session on Children, there are three preparatory committee meetings of governments. The last one will be in June 2001.

At the January preparatory session, the NGO Committee on UNICEF's Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict and the Canadian Children in Armed Conflict Working Group co-chaired a daily caucus on Children and Armed Conflict. The caucus identified the following issues as priorities for the outcome of the Special Session:

- Education as child protection/education in emergencies
- Youth participation in humanitarian response and peace-building
- Universal adoption of norms and standards
- Improve monitoring and reporting on violations of child rights
- Develop and implement mechanisms for accountability
- Promote action by the UN Security Council on children in armed conflict

The NGO caucus on children and armed conflict delivered an oral statement to the Preparatory Committee. The caucus on children and armed conflict is planning additional activities for the June preparatory committee, including a workshop on arms trafficking.

The Women's Commission chairs the Sub-Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and can be reached at Allison@theIRC.org for more information. Additional information about the Special Session on Children is available at www.unicef.org/specialsession/.

Mary Diaz, Executive Director

Looking Toward Home: Youth in Azerbaijan

No voices could have been more passionate in delivering the message of desperation of internally displaced persons in Azerbaijan than those of a group of internally displaced youth in a skit that they wrote and performed in Baku on February 2. The occasion was the opening ceremony of an exhibit of photographs "Looking toward Home: Internally Displaced Adolescents in Azerbaijan."

The photographs, taken by Noah Hendler and documented by Craig Cohen, depict the lives of young IDPs living in camps, settlements, abandoned railroad cars or sheds in the provinces bordering Nagorno-Karabakh, the homeland from which they were displaced as a result of the war with Armenia, beginning in 1991. (The IDP and refugee population in Azerbaijan now approaches one million, out of a total population of 8 million.) This moving exhibit was the centerpiece of a fundraising event sponsored by the Women's Commission and hosted by the International Rescue Committee's staff in Baku. Proceeds from the sale of the photographs, exhibition catalogs, and donations will benefit the Center for Young Leaders, a local

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In Kosovo, Iliriana Loxha leads a double life. She is an acclaimed singer and songwriter who loves jazz and traditional Albanian music and who has produced two acclaimed solo albums. But she is also a dedicated refugee activist working with Motrat Qiriaz, a prominent women's organization based in Prishtina, which promotes education and provides services, support and advocacy for rural women in Kosovo.

Iliriana currently organizes activity sessions for girls and runs a counseling program for bereaved women, but she occasionally uses her musical talents to support her refugee work, such as during Kosovo's refugee crisis in 1999 when she hosted concerts for children in the refugee camps. In March when she visited New York at the invitation of the Women's Commission to attend UN meetings on the Commission on the Status of Women, she found time between panel discussions to hold a concert to raise money for Motrat Qiriaz.

Iliriana was a refugee herself, forced to flee to Macedonia during Kosovo's refugee crisis. She found, however, that the discrimination she had faced as an Albanian in Kosovo did not stop at the border and at one point had to pretend to be Swedish to avoid problems with the Macedonian authorities. But Iliriana also recalled how a Serb friend of hers had to pretend to be Italian when she visited an Albanian refugee camp. As a result, she was determined to build links between Macedonian and Kosovar women's groups to encourage tolerance and open-mindedness. During her visit to New York, Iliriana told the Women's Commission that she had been encouraged to hear that a Macedonian women's group had chosen an Albanian to head its
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Making the Choice for a Better Life: Addressing the Needs of Kosovo's Youth

Millions of dollars spent reconstructing war-torn Kosovo will have been wasted unless the needs of young Kosovars are urgently addressed, according to a recent report by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. *Making the Choice for a Better Life—Promoting the Protection and Capacities of Kosovo Youth* concludes that the international community is failing to adequately involve Kosovo's young people in decision-making and reconstruction efforts, with serious implications for the future of the region.

"This is a generation which has known nothing but war," says Jane Lowicki, senior coordinator of the Women's Commission's Children and Adolescents Project. "The youth of Kosovo are struggling to recover from conflict, while making difficult decisions about their future and that of their communities. Their issues need to be prioritized at all levels so that a peaceful, more tolerant Kosovo can emerge from today's insecure, militarized society."

Adolescent Kosovar researchers interviewed almost 300 young Kosovars for the report. Despite Kosovo's enduring ethnic divide, these interviews revealed that young people from all communities share similar hopes and fears. Almost two years after the NATO bombing of Kosovo, adolescents of all ethnicities still cite security as their main concern. All groups say they are experiencing the pain of loss and all express a desire for freedom.

Albanian girls most fear kidnapping, trafficking and sexual abuse. Serbs and Egyptians (Hashkalija) living in isolated enclaves report hopelessness, lack of freedom of movement and the prevalence of weapons as their top concerns. Few of those interviewed were prepared to acknowledge the suffering of other ethnic groups. Intolerance, violence and insecurity remain pervasive in their lives.

More than half of Kosovo's nearly 2 million people are under the age of 24. Since the end of the war donors have contributed an estimated \$6 million for youth programs in Kosovo, supporting much-needed youth centers and providing psychological support to thousands of young people. Yet youth education and employment needs have not been adequately integrated into economic recovery planning. And although youth groups have undertaken community projects, including town clean-ups and HIV/AIDS awareness sessions, they have not succeeded in creating an influential, non-political voice for young Kosovars.

The survey revealed that many young people are falling

through the cracks, particularly girls who do not go to school or who are survivors of sexual violence, minority youth who are the targets of ethnic violence, and boys (and girls) involved in criminal activity.

"The local and international community must address the specific needs of 'at risk' youth, but we must also tap into the constructive capacities of young people to aid their recovery and prevent further conflict," says Ms. Lowicki. "Their energy, resilience and optimism may ultimately offer one of the brightest glimmers of hope for a more tolerant and peaceful Kosovo."

Making the Choice for a Better Life is available on our website: www.womenscommission.org.

Conditions Found Deplorable for Women Detained by INS

Perhaps no other Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) detention center has been the subject of as much criticism and controversy as the Krome center in Miami. Ever since the facility opened in 1980, human rights groups, legal service providers, detainees and their families, and even some Krome staff members themselves have complained of deplorable conditions and staff misconduct. (See Women's Commission News, fall 2000.)

In response to reports of widespread sexual abuse and harassment against women last summer, the Department of Justice has launched a full-scale investigation of Krome and its staff. The INS moved the women in December 2000 from Krome to the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center (TGK), a Miami Dade County prison. There the women have again been the target of abuse and have received even fewer services than they did in Krome.

The INS Miami district has entered into a 15-year contract with TGK to house women in its custody. The facility is receiving \$82 per day per detainee from the INS. On any given day, there are approximately 100 INS-detained women incarcerated in the facility, the majority of whom are asylum seekers who have never committed a crime and are simply exercising their right to seek refugee protection.

The conditions in TGK are deplorable and highly inappropriate for housing women who are in administrative—not criminal—custody. The Women's Commission completed a three-day assessment of TGK this past February.

Women testified that guards are abusive toward the women. The women cannot communicate with officers due to a lack of interpretation services. While an INS deportation officer is posted on-site, women to whom the

Women's Commission spoke could not distinguish between the INS officer and the correctional officer, exemplifying the women's lack of understanding as to why they are in prison. Two women have complained of sexual harassment and molestation in the facility. These incidents are now under investigation by the county. Officers repeatedly awaken women throughout the night by banging on their cell doors and shining flashlights in their faces.

The outdoor recreation area is accessible during daylight hours but consists only of a small area on the fourth floor of the prison surrounded with walls and covered by a mesh ceiling.

Medical care is grossly lacking. Women were denied medication that had been prescribed to them by the Public Health Service at Krome, including antidepressants. The Women's Commission witnessed a woman having an epileptic seizure; an officer admitted that the woman had at least once been mistakenly deprived of her medication to prevent such attacks.

The Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (FIAC) is struggling to provide services to the women at TGK. The group has stretched its staffing to cover both Krome and TGK by providing know-your-rights presentations twice weekly at TGK. However, FIAC is concerned about its ability to assist the women, especially those seeking asylum, as it only sees the women for individual counseling on the morning of their credible fear interviews. Moreover, it has been difficult for FIAC attorneys to access TGK. Rules for entrance to the facility appear to change depending on the officer on duty. There is only one attorney client visitation room per cell pod (roughly one per every 60 detainees). These rooms are not adequately soundproof. Telephones are often broken and toll-free calls to service providers are inadequate.

In addition, the INS has transferred at least three groups of women asylum seekers to the York County prison in Pennsylvania due to a lack of bed space at Krome. These transfers deprive women of legal counsel that would otherwise be available to them in Miami.

It is the women who are once again paying the price in the Miami district for the INS's inability to hold its officers accountable for abuses against detainees. Instead of releasing those who are eligible for parole, INS locked them all up in another jail. The INS also missed an important opportunity to develop alternatives to detention, such as shelters operated by appropriate social services agencies, for women in its custody. The women could have received humane treatment, and INS could have met its goal of monitoring their whereabouts during proceedings.

As one Colombian asylum seeker at TGK told the Women's Commission, "They're not beating us, but the

way they do things here is destroying us mentally. It's worse here than in Colombia."

This article by Wendy Young, Women's Commission director of government relations and US programs, was first printed in Detention Watch Network, produced by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

Small Steps Taken to Address Crisis in Burundi

The United Nations has made some progress in addressing Burundi's refugee crisis, following a Women's Commission delegation to the east African nation in October 2000. In its delegation report, the Women's Commission recommended that the UN strengthen its presence in Burundi and demonstrate leadership in tackling internal displacement. Coordination among UN agencies and between the UN and other humanitarian organizations had deteriorated since a fatal attack on UN staff the previous year, the Women's Commission found.

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. Many remain outside the reach of humanitarian agencies, largely because of the dangerous and fluid security situation, but also because of poor coordination and a lack of will on the part of the UN and the Burundi government to tackle the problem.

Dennis MacNamara, the UN's special coordinator for the displaced, visited Burundi two months after the Women's Commission delegation. Mr. MacNamara recommended that the UN provide focused humanitarian leadership in Burundi and that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) actively assume the role of UN focal point on internal displacement. The UN has since appointed a new coordinator for Burundi. More recently, the UN signed an agreement with the Burundi government to tackle the problem of Burundi's internally displaced, and UNHCR has appointed an emergency coordinator for the Democratic Republic of Congo/Burundi situation.

Burundi is still in the throes of a seven-year civil war and humanitarian assistance is difficult and dangerous. The Women's Commission is urging all those involved in the Arusha peace process to bring an end to the conflict. The Burundi delegation met with a variety of women's organizations involved in peace efforts both at the village and the national level. The Women's Commission recommends that international donors continue to support women-led initiatives that promote peace and reconciliation, including participation in the peace negotiations.

Reproductive Health

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design, monitoring and evaluation of reproductive health programs in their communities. Rather than assuming knowledge of what refugees need, relief agencies and others should ask the refugee population about their interests and concerns:

- Sexual violence has long been a concern for the women of Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. One survey from 1999 indicated that 28 percent of women in the camps had suffered sexual violence since becoming refugees. The relief agency CARE asked refugees in this camp to suggest ways of tackling the ongoing violence, and by using qualitative and participatory research methods were able to gain unique insights into the dynamics that lead to violence. Ideas such as vigilance groups to patrol the camp at night and “safe corridors” for women collecting firewood emerged from this participatory assessment which gave the refugee women a chance to speak out against sexual violence.

Conference presentations also showed that reproductive health is not just for women or married couples, but for men, women and adolescents. Men should be involved in education and decision-making. Young people are at high risk of reproductive health problems because of their lack of knowledge. Many research presentations outlined successful community-accepted approaches for reaching adolescents:

- Over a three-year period, around 900 refugee Girl Guides in Egypt, Zambia and Uganda earned themselves a Girl Guide merit badge by learning about reproductive and general health topics and passing their knowledge onto other refugee teenagers. The project was coordinated by Family Health International, in collaboration with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

The data from the conference can be used to improve ongoing programs or to initiate new ones. But sharing ideas is just a first step. It is essential that all those involved in refugee work take this new knowledge and apply it in their programs.

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. The interest in and the success of Conference 2000 illustrate the importance for continuing research and dialogue to support improved reproductive health among war-affected populations.

The proceedings from the conference are available at www.rhrc.org/conference/index.htm.

Angola: Chronic Problems in Reproductive Health Care

Angola has been embroiled in armed conflict for over 30 years, resulting in the displacement of a large proportion of the population. While many Angolans have fled the country, many more have become internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the country’s borders. The number of IDPs is estimated at 4 million, approximately one-third of the total population of 12.6 million.



Angolan teen mother and baby.

© Rachel K. Jones

Angola falls under the category of a chronic emergency, yet even the most basic minimum standards for reproductive health services are not being met, due largely to a lack of resources.

- IDPs from rural areas have never had access to or knowledge of reproductive health services. There are frequently no drugs, contraceptives or even simple equipment like stethoscopes or forceps available. Staff in health posts and traditional birth attendants want and need to be better trained.
- The limited services available to IDPs are not “youth-friendly.” Youth-focused programming is considered to be an unaffordable luxury. There is an embarrassment associated with reproductive health services that discourage youth from accessing services in the youth centers where they are likely to see family members or neighbors.
- Sexual and gender-based violence reportedly skyrocket whenever there is an influx of the military. Reported cases of SGBV tend only to involve very young girls (7-12 years old), but rape and domestic violence are considered to be very common among all age groups.
- Local and international health workers report that they suspect very high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, mostly gonorrhea, but very little testing or treatment is available to IDPs. Youth tend to self-diagnose and treat without even visiting a health facility. Some use traditional treatments which can cause complications such as miscarriage and infertility. Official statistics on HIV prevalence among Angolans is 3.5 percent, but the reality is estimated at closer to 10 percent and rising.

The Women’s Commission conducted an assessment of reproductive health among IDPs in Angola on behalf of the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium (RHRC) and in partnership with JSI Research and Training Institute and Columbia University.

Iliriana Loxha
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organization.

The current upheaval in Macedonia has meant a new case-load of refugees for Motrat Qiriazhi. Iliriana and her colleagues are offering support to women fleeing the fighting in northern Macedonia, ensuring that those who are sick receive medical attention and collecting much-needed clothing from the local community.

At the same time Iliriana is preparing for the release of her next album, which will be released in Kosovo later this year.

The Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury (EBP) Fund

The Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury (EBP) Fund for Reproductive Health Care and Rights for Adolescent Refugees, created by members of the Pillsbury family and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, honors the spirit and work of Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury, a leading advocate for women's rights and reproductive health care. With generous contributions from the Pillsburys' friends, family and colleagues, as well as Women's Commission supporters, the EBP Fund has begun helping to address the critical needs of uprooted adolescents for reproductive health information and services.

The availability of the EBP Fund is spurring refugees, field workers and local NGOs to explore how they can expand their services to reach boys and girls who have fled war and persecution and who are at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, being targeted for rape and sexual violence, early marriage and motherhood, and other dangers specific to adolescents.

In Tanzania, the EBP Fund purchased supplies to create educational materials for youth centers providing peer education to youth from Burundi living in four refugee camps. In Thailand, Social Action for Women, an NGO formed by Burmese refugees, received support for a mobile medical team that provides reproductive health care and education to teenage Burmese refugees working as illegal migrants. Women's Commission staff are working with NGOs in a number of countries on creative ways to reach adolescent refugees.

The Women's Commission thanks the Pillsbury family and the many generous donors to the EBP Fund for creating a critical resource to address the reproductive health needs of a particularly invisible group – refugee and internally displaced adolescents. We continue to seek contributions to help meet our initial goal of \$100,000 by 2002. Contact Ellen Jorgensen at 212.551.3115, ellen@theIRC.org for more information.

Urgent Action Fund:

A Resource for Women's Human Rights

Launched in 1997, the Urgent Action Fund provides women's human rights activists with funding to enable them to respond to unexpected crises or opportunities that could protect or promote women's human rights. Such opportunities arise when an outside event alters the situation, creating a space where quick intervention can have a significant impact. Decisions are generally made within 72 hours. The Fund focuses on four categories in which women face particular obstacles or danger and in which the opportunities for making significant impact are great:

- Areas of recent or threatened armed conflict
- Precedent-setting opportunities that may occur in any region of the world
- Women's human rights defenders who are threatened because of their activism

The actions we support must be:

- Related to a pre-determined plan or strategy to advance women's human rights, and designed to advance structural change that will improve women's human rights broadly
- The situation or opportunity is unanticipated and outside the group's control, and responsive action must happen quickly to be effective
- Other funding is not likely to be found in time, although the larger strategy has strong potential for financial support to continue making progress
- The organization has the capacity to sustain the strategy and has the support of others involved in women's human rights or related fields, locally or globally
- The Fund is able to secure endorsements for the group from known advisors or other funders

The Fund looks most closely not at the activity but at the opportunity that has arisen and the broad strategic action that is planned to take advantage of it. It is this focus on strategic intervention that makes the Fund unique.

The Fund is not able to make grants for humanitarian efforts, general program activities or individual participation at conferences. For information about how to apply to the Fund we encourage you to review our website at www.urgentactionfund.org or contact us directly at urgentact@urgentactionfund.org

Brown-bag Presentations

The Women's Commission has occasional brown-bag lunch presentations at which staff and guests talk about their work. If you are in the New York city area, please let Erin Hagopian (erin@theIRC.org) know if you would like to be added to our e-mail notification list.



Join us Monday, June 4, 2001 for the
Voices of Courage Awards Luncheon

Roosevelt Hotel, New York City

Honoring refugees who have dedicated themselves to
improving education in emergency settings

For more details, call Patricia Evert Productions at 212.786.9368

Staff updates

The Women's Commission welcomes **Lynne Bethke**, education in emergencies project coordinator; **Henia Dakkak**, emergency obstetric care technical advisor; **Patricia Weiss Fagen**, team leader, review of UNHCR policy/guidelines on the protection of refugee women and girls; **Sam Owusu-Afriyie**, grants manager; and **Jeanne Ward**, sexual and gender-based violence researcher.

Take Action With a Click of Your Mouse

You can now take action on advocacy issues of concern to the Women's Commission with a few clicks of your mouse. Go to www.womenscommission.org and visit our advocacy action center. Recent actions have been about children abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda and the detention of children seeking asylum by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

UNHCR Gallery of Prominent Refugees

As part of its 50th anniversary, UNHCR has put together a "gallery of prominent refugees," featuring profiles of uprooted men and women who have achieved prominence in the arts, politics, science and other fields. To find out more, visit the site at www.unhcr-50.org/gallery/igallery.html.

Azerbaijan

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nongovernmental organization that focuses on the special needs of adolescent IDPs. It provides support for projects involving leadership, democracy, volunteerism and public activism, and works on the implementation of civic initiatives for displaced youth throughout the country.

The hardships faced by the internally displaced were dramatically illustrated by the poignant cries of frustration expressed by the young actors in their skit. In an attempt to recreate conditions in their school, the teenagers huddled, shivering from the lack of heat, and passed from one to the other the book they were sharing. Cries of longing for the life they had before, for their houses, for trees, for warmth and joy, rang out in the reception hall as the crowd became silent and motionless.

Many in Azerbaijan have been IDPs for nearly ten years, and harbor little hope of an agreement that would allow them to return to their homeland soon. During those years, the international relief community has provided assistance, and is now engaged in projects designed to sustain community development. Much of the aid provided by international agencies and other donors, however, may end in this calendar year. It is certain to be greatly reduced. The number of IDPs, however, will not decrease. Funds allocated for relief in previous years may not be made available as funds for development. If additional resources are not available for development, even for water, electricity, fuels or the support of medical clinics, the IDPs will continue to live in desperation, with ever diminishing hope.

By Barbara Johnson, Women's Commission board member.



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