



WOMEN'S
REFUGEE
COMMISSION



RESEARCH. RETHINK. RESOLVE.

Stories from the field

2012 Annual Report



HOW WE ACHIEVE CHANGE:
RESEARCH. RETHINK. RESOLVE.

Our work begins in the community. We listen to displaced people, learn about their essential needs and capacities and identify potential solutions to these challenges.

Our solutions take the form of research reports, recommendations, tools and technical assistance provided to agencies and organizations worldwide to build the capacity and resilience of displaced women and children. Our work ends back in the community as our advocated improvements in policy and programs lead to lasting change on the ground.

OUR VISION

is a world in which refugee and internally displaced women, children and youth are safe, healthy and self-reliant; have their human rights respected and protected; and inform and drive their own solutions and development.

OUR MISSION

is to improve the lives and protect the rights of women, children and youth displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CO-CHAIRS

“Because of our work, refugee and migrant women and young people are safer, stronger, healthier and better protected.”

In 2012, humanitarian crises around the world continued to displace millions of women, children and youth. From the horrific violence in Syria to the armed struggle in northern Mali to the renewed fighting in war-torn eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, conflict has ripped through the lives of women and girls, destroying their sense of stability, safety and community, and putting them at increased risk for gender-based violence such as rape and abuse.

In this report, you will read how the Women’s Refugee Commission’s (WRC’s) unique model of research-based advocacy has ensured that displaced and migrant women, children and youth are better served as new emergencies arise and protracted situations continue. Looking back over the past year, we are excited to report that the WRC has had a marked influence—on policy and programs—improving humanitarian practice to transform lives on the ground.

Our 2012 achievements are many. We increased reproductive health care access for sexual violence survivors. We made working environments safer for women and girls so they could pursue more economic options. We promoted the use of fuel-efficient stoves to reduce women’s risk of assault while collecting firewood. We consulted persons with disabilities to ensure increased inclusion in all programs and services. Finally, we led the movement for expanded visitation rights for detained migrants. Because of our work, refugee and migrant women and young people are safer, stronger, healthier and better protected. The organizations

on the ground that serve them are better informed and more efficient. And the international community is better positioned to create policies that will positively impact millions of displaced persons around the world.

In December, the WRC saw the passing of a true pioneer and fierce contributor to its legacy of protecting the rights of refugee women and children. Catherine O’Neill, who co-founded the organization in 1989, died peacefully after a long illness. She will be remembered by all for her passion and tenacity in advocating on behalf of people who are often forgotten or overlooked.

Your enduring commitment is critical as we continue to confront the many humanitarian crises that ravage the lives of women, children and youth worldwide. Your partnership has enabled us to have a notable impact on the lives and rights of displaced persons who remain in the crowded camps and urban areas they now call home. We thank you for your partnership and for standing with us as we amplify the voices of the women and children whose capacities and resilience deserve our recognition and support.



Sarah Costa

Sarah Costa
Executive Director



Robin Fray Carey

Robin Fray Carey
Board Co-Chair



Jocelyn Cunningham

Jocelyn Cunningham
Board Co-Chair



OUR NICHE

“They [the Women’s Refugee Commission] are the only ones whose sole purpose is to improve the lives of women and children refugees and migrants. Other people have sections and units, but in the whole NGO [nongovernmental organization] world, this is a niche that no one else has.”

Hazel Reitz, Commissioner, Women’s Refugee Commission

Since 1989, the Women’s Refugee Commission has been the foremost advocate for displaced and migrant women, children and youth—ensuring that their needs for safety, health and self-reliance are addressed. Our applied research and sustained advocacy improve their lives and protect their rights, while the consistency of our approach enables us to map and measure our achievements and impact over time.

The examples that follow—five major accomplishments of 2012—are stories of such change.

“Before, we didn’t know about gender-based violence. Now, we can return to our communities, share information and provide care to patients. We can work better than before.”

— Community Health Worker

SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ENSURING ACCESS TO LIFE-SAVING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE



The WRC has worked tirelessly for more than 20 years to ensure that reproductive health care services are in place for women and girls displaced by crisis. Huge progress has been made over the past two decades, as we have worked to bring awareness to this issue and advocate for change. Yet more remains to be done in conflict and post-conflict situations where there are no health facilities or they are too far or too challenging to reach.

Our three-year project with partners on the Thai-Burma border enabled community health workers to care for sexual violence survivors, and resulted in an innovative model of health care in 2012. We trained members of the displaced community to provide appropriate and confidential medical

attention and post-trauma support to women and girls who have experienced sexual violence. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) plans to pilot our cutting-edge community health worker model in Somalia and South Sudan.

This endeavor represents a promising beginning in bringing reproductive health care one step closer to the community in places where access to health services is challenging. In addition, we are working with UNICEF to develop a training tool to help community health workers care for survivors in conflict settings globally.

“There were many things I learned in the course which we can apply in future program development – particularly how to ensure that income generation activities avoid having an unintentional harmful effect on women and vulnerable individuals.”

— Online course participant, Cafédirect Producers Foundation



LIVELIHOODS

CREATING SAFER & MORE EFFECTIVE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN & GIRLS

Women and girls uprooted by war and natural disaster face high risk of sexual violence. They need access to economic opportunities to provide for themselves and their families; however, at times, earning a living can heighten women’s risks of exploitation and abuse. There is a need to mitigate the risk of violence in these emerging economic programs for women and girls and develop ways to enable them to work safely.

The WRC has been researching the links between violence and livelihoods as well as strategies for helping communities to empower and protect women and adolescent girls.

In 2012, we developed tools for fieldworkers, conducted trainings globally and designed an e-learning course in order to reach those unable to come to the trainings.

Our safety mapping tool and animated video help fieldworkers identify ways to reduce women and girls’ risk of physical violence and develop protection strategies to enable them to live and work safely. We concluded a series of 10 global trainings on mitigating risks of sexual violence, which reached 350 practitioners from over 100 organizations working around the world. And finally, over 200 humanitarian practitioners have completed our online learning module.

*“My daughter and I will not be going to the bushes to collect firewood anymore.
We don’t have to worry about being raped or sexually molested.”*

— Single mother, Saliga refugee camp, Somalia

FUEL & FIREWOOD

PROTECTING WOMEN & GIRLS FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY PROVIDING SAFE ACCESS TO COOKING FUEL

Displaced women and girls often risk physical abuse and sexual assault when they go out to collect the firewood they need to prepare meals for their families. The WRC led the Inter-agency Standing Committee’s Safe Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy (SAFE) Task Force, which developed guidance to address the need for safe cooking fuel in humanitarian settings. Policymakers and practitioners in crisis settings around the world now use this guidance. Yet, life-threatening situations still exist wherever displaced women and girls are unable to safely access the fuel needed to cook for their families.

Somalia, still suffering from decades of civil war, experienced increased levels of famine and drought in 2012, which drove displaced women and girls into remote areas in search of

firewood. Recognizing this life-threatening situation, the WRC persuaded and worked with our operational partners across the Horn of Africa to provide fuel-efficient stoves to counter the risks of women and girls being assaulted while collecting firewood.

As an outcome of this work, UNICEF and the humanitarian agency Relief International are supporting two projects providing more than 16,000 fuel-efficient stoves to displaced girls and women in Mogadishu, Somalia. We are also conducting a pilot project in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, in partnership with the International Rescue Committee, to provide displaced families with new Envirofit stoves. These stoves use less firewood than traditional stoves, decreasing the number of times women and girls must venture into unsafe areas.



WOMEN'S
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IN 2012, WRC PROGRAM TEAMS VISITED 24 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD TO CONDUCT RESEARCH, SUPPORT AND TRAIN 1,375 REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AND 1,900 PARTNER ORGANIZATION STAFF AS SHOWN ON THIS MAP.

- Adolescent Girls
- Disabilities
- Fuel & Firewood
- Livelihoods
- Migrant Rights & Justice*
- Sexual & Reproductive Health

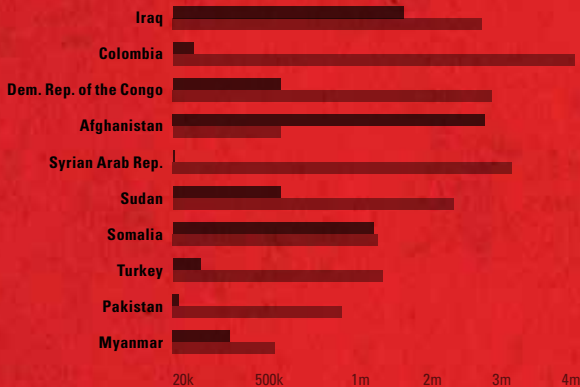
* also conducted research and trainings in Geneva and cities across the U.S.



THE 3 MAIN ADVOCACY LOCATIONS FOR WRC.

Geneva, UNHCR
New York, United Nations
Washington DC, Government Agencies

TOP 10 COUNTRIES WITH THE LARGEST POPULATION OF DISPLACED PERSONS.



Data from 2011

Refugees
Internally displaced persons





AREAS WITH OVER 100,000 DISPLACED PERSONS

“We are delighted [to have] a workshop [about] disabilities. Things we liked [were] participation of persons with disabilities; they are honoured as human beings in the workshop; [and] group discussions with all to solve problems. We want this type of workshop in the future in the camp.”

— Refugee leader, Bangladesh

DISABILITIES

ENSURING ACCESS & INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN ALL PROGRAMS & SERVICES



Refugees with disabilities are often overlooked, neglected and excluded from humanitarian programs and services. Following our breakthrough research report and the launch of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) guidance on refugees with disabilities, we continually advocate for changes in humanitarian practice to promote increased access and inclusion for this population.

In 2012, in partnership with UNHCR, we held consultations with 400 refugees with disabilities and conducted training and action planning workshops for UNHCR country offices, NGO partners and disability organizations in Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal, Ethiopia and the Philippines.

Persons with disabilities played a central role in our workshops. They demonstrated their skills and capacities and shared their program ideas with 250 humanitarian staff, who are now better equipped to include the estimated 80,000 persons with disabilities across the five pilot countries in their programs and services. The WRC is now conducting assessments in Ethiopia and Nepal to measure the impact of these trainings on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian programs and services, and enable us to make recommendations on further policy changes to the UNHCR.

"I was sexually assaulted in one of the ICE detention facilities. I needed medical attention but nothing was done. I was about to lose custody of my children, who are U.S. citizens. After talking to the Women's Refugee Commission at Etowah [in Alabama], the next day I was provided with medical attention. Shortly after that, I was released. I have since qualified for a U-visa [for victims of crimes] and have work authorization. Best of all, I have custody of my four children, who mean everything to me."

— Jakir Shiakh



MIGRANT RIGHTS & JUSTICE

PROTECTING MIGRANTS' HUMAN RIGHTS & ABILITY TO ACCESS JUSTICE & DUE PROCESS

Detention is too often used as a response to an increased influx of asylum seekers and migrants in the United States. Migrants can be held in detention for years with little or no access to critical psychological, legal and medical services. The WRC has been at the forefront in policy and legislative reform for migrants seeking protection, advocating for stronger transparency, oversight, accountability and alternatives to detention.

In 2012, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced a new policy for migrants in detention, commonly referred to as the "Visitation Directive." This progressive policy provides access for any organization that wishes to interview detainees without pre-authorized approval.

Further, it enables organizations to monitor conditions to determine facility compliance with national standards. The WRC's sustained advocacy was critical in bringing about this major policy change.

Prior to the "Visitation Directive," the WRC was one of very few NGOs granted access to the detainee population. Our follow-up with local facilities and ICE after visiting detention centers has often led to concrete changes in conditions for detainees. This new policy multiplies that impact because any organization can now monitor or speak with detainees. It strengthens oversight at both a national and local level and helps improve conditions for detained migrants.



DONOR PROFILE

**DEBRA WALTON, MANAGING DIRECTOR, ENTERPRISE CONTENT, THOMSON REUTERS;
WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION BOARD MEMBER**

“I have a heartfelt preoccupation with helping women and making a difference at the most fundamental level.”

“Throughout my career, I have been passionate about supporting women. Before I got involved with the Women’s Refugee Commission, I focused on the challenges women faced as they reached the glass ceiling. But I’ve since realized that we need to understand how women can secure their basic human rights and maintain a semblance of human dignity. The Women’s Refugee Commission has a unique model that gives women a voice. Now, as a Board member, I have a heartfelt preoccupation with helping women and making a difference at the most fundamental level.

WRC’s effectiveness is embodied in its ability to conduct research to identify the basic pain points of refugees and migrants and then use its influence with agencies worldwide to broadly implement the necessary changes on the ground. The organization delivers practical, pragmatic solutions to systemic problems—the clarity with which WRC articulates these solutions is transformative.

For most of us it is nearly impossible to comprehend the life of a refugee. But have you ever found yourself in a foreign country and you’ve lost your passport, even for one day?

There is a feeling of utter panic and helplessness. Imagine how abandoned displaced persons feel with this lack of identity, and being at the mercy of a foreign government. Now multiply this emotion 365 days a year for 17 years, which is the average period of protracted displacement.



I continue to be humbled by the incredible work of the Women’s Refugee Commission to solve real problems and change these people’s lives—restoring dignity and resilience to displaced persons in the midst of the most horrific situations.”

WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION

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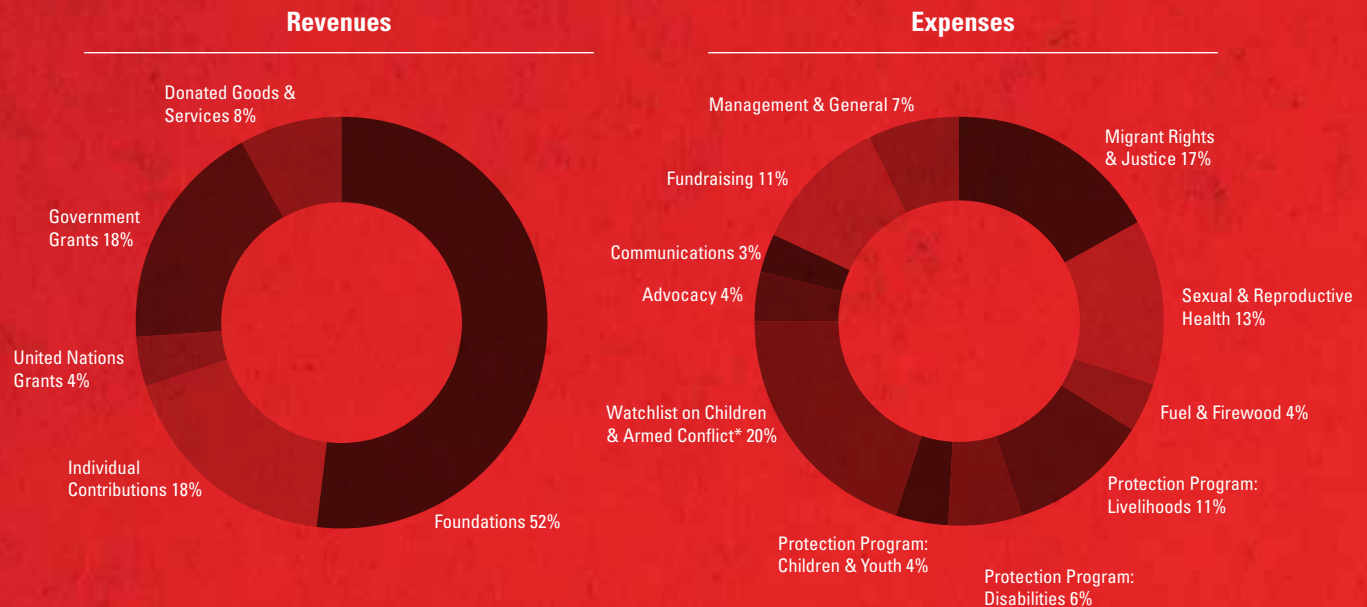
The Women's Refugee Commission's financial health is strong despite a challenging economic environment.

Our net assets remain stable, at over \$2 million.

We raised over \$6 million in fiscal year 2012, surpassing the previous fiscal year by 12 percent.

We continue to maintain extremely low administrative expenses (7 percent).

82 cents of every dollar raised is spent on programs.



The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) is affiliated with and is legally part of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. We do not receive direct financial support from the IRC. This financial summary is compiled from the 2012 annual financial statement of the IRC. A copy of the IRC's audited 2012 financial statements, which include the financial results of the WRC, is available upon request.

*Due to its growth, it was mutually agreed that Watchlist on Children & Armed Conflict should go out on its own. Watchlist became independent from the WRC in August 2012.

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