



Women's Refugee Commission at Work Plays Key Role in Changing U.S. Detention Policy

As part of the U.S. administration's new agenda to overhaul the nation's detention and immigration policies and procedures, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced in August that it would end the practice of detaining immigrant families at the T. Don Hutto detention center in Taylor, Texas. Michelle Brané

At the time, children received only one hour of school a day, were provided with inadequate medical care, insufficient time to eat and, worst of all, were disciplined in inappropriately severe ways.

As a result of our report, the ensuing media attention and a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union, the facility began to implement significant improvements, including providing more appropriate education for children, time for recreational activities and general freedom of movement.

Despite these changes, the Women's Refugee Commission continued to call for the center's closing, stressing that the family detention standards being used are entirely inappropriate and do not address issues of discipline and common decency.

We welcome the administration's decision to stop detaining families at Hutto (women will continue to be held there) and hope this is an indicator that it might pursue alternatives to current detention policies.

We will continue our efforts to push for changes in all national detention policies, including advocating the closing of the Berks Family Shelter Care Facility in Leesport, Pennsylvania.

"The decision to stop detaining families at Hutto lends credence to the administration's assertions that it plans to expand the use of alternatives to detention and create a civil system that reduces the use of detention for vulnerable groups such as women, families and asylum seekers," says Brané.



Michelle Brané (left), director of our detention and asylum program, interviews a young woman held at the Fort Brown (Texas) Border Patrol station.

and Emily Butera, the Women's Refugee Commission detention and asylum team, have made repeated visits to the Hutto detention center to assess its practices and policies. In the February 2007 report, *Locking Up Family Values: The Detention of Immigrant Families*, they describe in detail the inhumane conditions families and children were forced to live under at Hutto.

TAKE ACTION TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

Support Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard's (CA) "Immigration Oversight and Fairness Act," which aims to create protections for vulnerable populations, including unaccompanied children and women, and create legally enforceable detention standards that will ensure the dignity and safety of immigration detainees and protect their due process rights. Go to: womensrefugeecommission.org and click on "Take Action."

CONTENTS

Letter from the Executive Director	2
Remembering Mary Anne Schwalbe and Beverlee Bruce	3
Gathering Wood, Risking Rape	3
Q&A with Dina Dublon	4
Building Livelihoods	5





Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our first newsletter as the Women's Refugee Commission. In January we took the plunge and changed our name; we feel our new name and tagline (see box) nicely and succinctly encapsulates who we are and what we do. With our new name came a new logo—which, in our trademark red, represents strength and progress—a newly designed website and a new look for our publications.

This is an exciting year for us, as we mark our 20th year of successful advocacy on behalf of refugee women, children and young people around the world. It gives us an opportunity to look back on what we've achieved over the past two decades, while keeping our eyes firmly on the present and the future.

Over the years, while our mission has remained the same, our work has expanded to cover many issues, including reproductive health, livelihoods, refugees with disabilities and immigrant women, children and families held in U.S. detention facilities. The quality of our research and recommendations is widely recognized, and we continue to identify and advocate on issues that are otherwise widely ignored.

In the past few months, we have released three cutting-edge pieces of work, which we know are leading to concrete results. In February, we issued a landmark study on unaccompanied children held in immigration custody in the U.S., and we are now pressing for legislation that will address the problems we reported on. In April, in partnership with United Nations and humanitarian agencies, we launched innovative guidelines that address the need for safe access to cooking fuel in crisis situations, specifying who needs to do what and when. And in May, we published a groundbreaking manual on livelihoods, which will guide humanitarian workers as they develop programs to help refugees earn a living. You can read more about these initiatives and all our work at womensrefugeecommission.org.

In these challenging financial times, we feel especially grateful for your support. Without you, we could not do our essential work to improve the lives of displaced women, children and young people everywhere.



Carolyn Makinson
Executive Director

Research. Rethink. Resolve.

Our new tagline perfectly describes the work of the Women's Refugee Commission. We listen to refugee women and young people and asylum seekers to find out what they need. We assess and identify best practices and solutions. On Capitol Hill, at the United Nations and with humanitarian organizations and governments, we advocate vigorously for improvements in refugee policy and practice until measurable long-term change is realized.

The Women's Refugee Commission advocates vigorously for laws, policies and programs to improve the lives and protect the rights of refugee and internally displaced women, children and young people, including those seeking asylum—bringing about lasting, measurable change.



**WOMEN'S
REFUGEE
COMMISSION**

Research. Rethink. Resolve.

122 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10168-1289
212.551.3115

info@wrcommission.org
womensrefugeecommission.org

Carolyn Makinson, Executive Director
Glenda Burkhart, Board Co-chair
Dina Dublon, Board Co-chair



Women's Refugee Commission Mourns Passing of Two Luminaries



Mary Anne Schwalbe

The Women's Refugee Commission is sad to announce the passing in September of founding director Mary Anne Schwalbe and chair emerita Beverlee Bruce.



Beverlee Bruce

Mary Anne led the organization from 1990 to 1994, and was an eloquent, devoted and tireless advocate for women, children and adolescents affected by war and persecution. She inspired countless women and girls, and men, too, to get involved in refugee issues.

Beverlee joined the board of the Women's Refugee Commission in 1991 and was chair from 1995 to 1999. She participated in many organizational delegations to assess the situation and needs of refugee and displaced women and children.

Both will be sorely missed.

Gathering Wood, Risking Rape

New Guidelines to Protect Women and Girls

Every time displaced women and girls leave camps to gather firewood for cooking, they risk being raped, beaten or even killed. The Women's Refugee Commission was the first organization to draw attention to the issue of safe access to cooking fuel during conflict and displacement. In April, an interagency task force that we led launched new guidelines addressing access to cooking fuel in humanitarian crises. The task force was co-chaired by the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Women's Refugee Commission.

On April 30, we celebrated this groundbreaking accomplishment at the launch of these guidelines, held at the German Mission to the United Nations. Speakers included the High Commissioner, a high-level representative from the WFP, German Ambassador to the UN Dr. Martin Ney, InterAction President Sam Worthington and Women's Refugee Commission executive director Carolyn Makinson.

The guidelines consist of two user-friendly posters with a flash drive loaded with background materials. One poster is a matrix that defines agency roles and responsibilities for developing a coordinated fuel strategy in new and ongoing humanitarian crises. The other poster consists of decision-tree diagrams to help humanitarian workers choose the most appropriate fuel strategies for their particular setting. They are being distributed to field offices of major UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations worldwide. We are also holding training workshops for humanitarian workers and agency staff in refugee settings, as well as in New York and Geneva.

For more information, go to getbeyondfirewood.org.



Q&A with Dina Dublon

long-time supporter and board co-chair of the Women's Refugee Commission

As a businesswoman, did you think about your return on investment when you decided to support the Women's Refugee Commission?

I now see my giving as an investment, but that was not the concept I had when I started contributing. Initially, it was a sense of obligation, a right and a privilege to do some good while doing well for myself and my family. As I grew professionally and gained influence I also realized how narrow my sphere was. That made me open to listening, reading about and discussing the terrible conditions of many in developing countries and the barriers to improvement.

What first brought you to the Women's Refugee Commission?

Emotionally, I relate to the particular plight of women and children, and that's the population that two of the organizations I'm particularly involved with, the Women's Refugee Commission and the Global Fund [for Women], focus on. As I learned, women and children represent close to 75 percent of the world's approximately 40 million displaced people. To devise effective policies one needs to have that lens.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of being a board member and board co-chair?

For me, it's the opportunity to get more informed about the conditions, as well as the more strategic changes necessary for improvements to the situation. And the opportunity to travel has made it all more tangible as I can touch, see and feel the people and not just treat them as a research paper.

You've traveled with the Women's Refugee Commission. What trip affected you the most?

My trip to Rwanda at the end of 1999 was my first trip to Africa and a post-conflict situation. It was a vivid and horrendous example of the devastation and human price of conflict. The initiative, commitment and hopefulness of the women who organized themselves to rebuild impressed me the most.

Is there a particular story from your travels that stays with you?

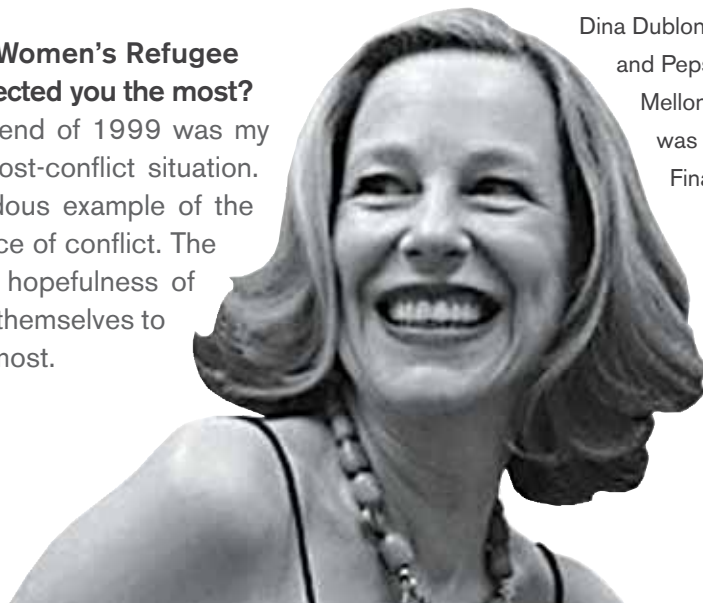
I was impressed by many courageous women leading change in their societies. The "Polyclinic of Hope" was bringing together Hutu and Tutsi women to help each other with emotional and medical problems and simply fixing the roofs above their heads; there were villages constructed by women and children heads of households in post-genocide Rwanda.

Why should people support the Women's Refugee Commission?

I have come to realize there is no silver bullet to bring about change—you need to pull from all directions and therefore there are many ways to get involved, from the grassroots support to bringing about policy change at the highest level.

The Women's Refugee Commission focuses on the policy changes—it connects to the reality on the ground by listening to people receiving aid and evaluates how services are being delivered. We identify and promote policy and guidelines for more effective approaches.

These are important returns on investment, both for their real impact and for the emotional satisfaction.



Dina Dublon is a director of Accenture, Microsoft and PepsiCo. She is also a trustee of Carnegie Mellon University. Until December 2004, she was Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for JPMorgan Chase.

Building Livelihoods

Helping Women Like Yin Yin Earn a Living

Yin Yin* fled to Malaysia from Myanmar (Burma) because of harassment by the military. In Kuala Lumpur she found an off-the-books job as a waitress and dishwasher at a Chinese restaurant. One day, when she was several months pregnant, her employer followed her to the storeroom and attempted to rape her. She fled and never returned. Because the law did not allow her to work legally, she had no legal recourse. She did not receive her final week's pay and could not go to the police to report the attempted rape. Too traumatized to find another job, she now lives in a community center with her baby, afraid to leave her room.



Director of protection Dale Buscher (right) met with a market vendor in Nairobi, Kenya, during a livelihoods training workshop.

When people are forced to leave their homes because of conflict and become refugees or internally displaced, they also leave behind the means by which they earned a living and supported their family. Many displaced people are forced to resort to harmful behaviors to survive, such as prostitution and trading sex for food. If they work in

unregulated jobs, they are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and have no recourse to local law enforcement.

Building Livelihoods: What We've Done

The Women's Refugee Commission recently completed the first three-year phase of a comprehensive livelihoods initiative. After field research in 10 countries, pilot projects to test innovative practices and interviews with experts, we produced and are now promoting use of *Building Livelihoods: A Field Manual for Practitioners in Humanitarian Settings*. This is the first-ever comprehensive "how-to" manual on livelihoods programming for use by staff working in refugee situations.

The manual covers livelihood programs in camp-based and urban displacement settings, as well as in communities of origin to which refugees return when conflict ends. It clarifies the steps necessary for effective program design. Several chapters detail specific interventions, such as cash-for-work, vocational training and apprenticeships, microfinance and enterprise development. The manual provides

* Not her real name.

What Will Your Legacy Be?

One of the simplest ways to support the mission of the Women's Refugee Commission is by leaving a contribution in your will. You may decide to leave a specific amount, a percentage of your assets or the remainder of your estate after you have provided for family members.

You can also name the Women's Refugee Commission as a beneficiary of a charitable trust. Your attorney or financial advisor can advise you on the various types of charitable trusts and assist you in establishing a trust that is tailored to your personal needs.

Please contact Janet Ralston, director of development, at 212.551.0959 or JanetR@wrcommission.org to find out more about how you can leave a legacy gift.

20th Anniversary

Voices of Courage Luncheon

Gotham Hall, New York City



Dr. Shamail Azimi from Afghanistan and Mariatu Kamara from Sierra Leone were honored at our May 7th Voices of Courage awards luncheon.



Lesley Stahl, CBS 60 Minutes correspondent (left), hosted the event. Liv Ullmann (right), co-founder and honorary chair of the Women's Refugee Commission, gave the keynote speech and presented the awards. Carolyn Makinson, executive director (center).

Read more at womensrefugeecommission.org.

SAVE THE DATE

May 6, 2010

Voices of Courage Awards Luncheon

Gotham Hall, New York City

Honoring refugee women
and youth innovators.

HOLIDAY GIFTS ARE HERE

From decorative boxes handcrafted in Swaziland to eco-friendly bamboo clothing and a CD of music from around the world, our online retail partners offer a wide variety of gifts for the holidays—and we benefit from a percentage of the sales! Please visit our website at womensrefugeecommission.org and click “Donate” then “Shop for the Cause.” You will be delighted with the unique gifts offered!



Building Livelihoods

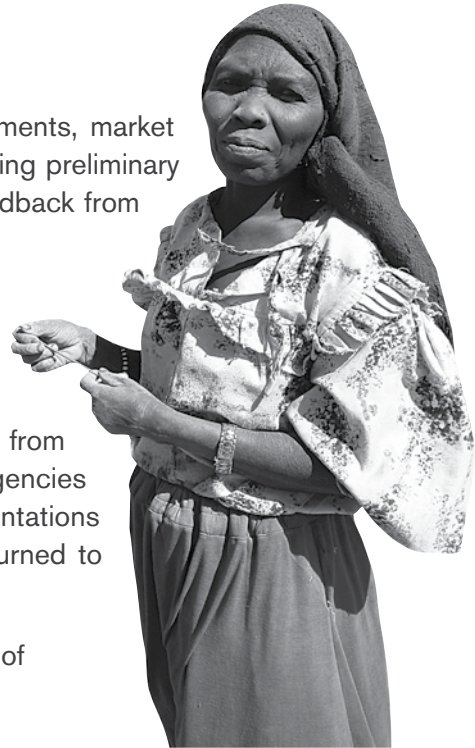
Continued from page 5

tools and approaches for conducting participatory needs assessments, market assessments and monitoring and evaluation, among others. Following preliminary distribution of the manual, we have received extensive positive feedback from both the field and agency headquarters.

Workshops Teach Practitioners How to Improve Livelihoods Programming

Beginning in May, we rolled out the manual at regional workshops in Ghana, Kenya and Thailand, bringing together field workers from humanitarian nongovernmental organizations and United Nations agencies to learn about our findings and recommendations. Through presentations and role playing, participants gained practical knowledge and returned to their jobs ready to try new approaches to an old problem.

Read more about our livelihoods program at the livelihoods section of womensrefugeecommission.org.



Honor Someone Special



Whether for a holiday gift or memorial, we have beautiful cards to send in your name. You can make a tribute gift online at womensrefugeecommission.org. Click “Donate,” then “Donate Now.” In appreciation for your gift of \$100 or more, we’ll send you a copy of Voices of Courage Award winner Mariatu Kamara’s inspiring book, *The Bite of the Mango*.



WOMEN'S
REFUGEE
COMMISSION

Research. Rethink. Resolve.

122 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10168-1289

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
JERSEY CITY, NJ
PERMIT NO. 295



MAKE A BIG IMPACT!

YOUR SMALL MONTHLY GIFTS ADD UP.

You can make a big impact by supporting our mission with a small monthly gift. An automatic online donation of a modest amount every month will add up to a substantial gift by year's end. Go to our website, womensrefugeecommission.org, click "Donate" and then click on "Become a recurring donor." It's fast, easy and secure. Or you can fill out, sign and mail the form below. Your gift will show up each month on your credit card bill.

I authorize the Women's Refugee Commission to charge my credit card monthly in the amount that I have indicated. I understand that I may cancel my pledge at any time. A record of each gift will appear on my credit card statement, and I will receive a year-end tax letter indicating the cumulative amount of my monthly gifts at the beginning of the following year.

Signature

Date

Please mail to:

Women's Refugee Commission
122 E. 42nd St. , 11th Fl.
New York, NY 10168-1289

Or use the enclosed envelope.

- I want to support the work of the Women's Refugee Commission with an **automatic monthly gift** charged to my credit card in the amount of:
- \$25 \$20 \$15 Other \$ _____

**Minimum monthly donation is \$10.*

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Email

Please charge my contribution to:

- Mastercard VISA Amex

Account #:

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Expiration Date: ____/____