



ANNUAL REPORT

2001-2002



ANCORW

Level 15 Matthews Building, University of NSW, Kensington

PO Box 973 Kensington, NSW 2033

PH: (02) 9385 1961

FAX: (02) 9662 8991

EMAIL: ancorw@unsw.edu.au

WEB SITE: <http://www.ancorw.unsw.edu.au>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANCORW'S MISSION STATEMENT

ANCORW BOARD MEMBERS

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

ANCORW'S YEAR AT A GLANCE

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

- Pre-School, Early Intervention, Literacy and Numeracy Program, Auburn
- Training Courses

NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court
- Fundraising activities
- Student Field Work Placements

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Refugee Women at Risk
- Thai Burma border Fieldtrip report
- The World Conference Against Racism

BOARD MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

TREASURER'S REPORT

AUDITOR'S REPORT

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

ANCORW'S MISSION STATEMENT

ANCORW is a lobbying, advocacy and research group which works with and for refugee women and their families in order to bring about change in the refugee system and to enhance their ability to rebuild their lives.

ANCORW regards refugee issues as human rights issues. Empowerment and the full achievement of all human rights for refugee women and their children is equally as important as protection.

At the national level, ANCORW, lobbies for changes in domestic law, social policy and for improved service provision.

At an International level, ANCORW lobbies at the United Nations for changes in International law, United Nations Declarations.

ANCORW is committed to undertaking research into issues which adversely affect the lives of refugee women and their dependant children and to use this research to lobby for change.

ANCORW is committed to empower refugee women to have control over their own lives and to advocate on their own behalf through the provision of advocacy training and by providing opportunities for refugee women to participate in national and international forums.

ANCORW BOARD MEMBERS

NAME	POSITION/ QUALIFICATION/ EXPERIENCE
Linda Bartolomei	Senior Researcher, The Centre for Refugee Research and ANCORW; Trainer.
Kiri Hata	Development, training and management in community and legal sectors, refugee, migrant and Indigenous communities.
Nicole Hercus	Research Associate and conference coordinator, The Centre for Refugee Research and ANCORW
Maria Esperanza Iglesias	Worker in the Nicaraguan community; Generalist CSS worker, Macarthur MRC
Beatriz Leoncini	Community management and training specialist; multi-sectoral consultant on refugee settlement services.
Nancy Maksimovic	Social worker in community service; Researcher on refugee children and families.
Juliana Nkrumah	Coordinator NSW Female Genital Mutilation Education Program; work with many African community groups on settlement issues.
Eileen Pittaway	Director, The Centre for Refugee Research; Lecturer University of New South Wales; Co-chair, Asian Women's Human Rights Council.
Amrit Versha	Community worker
Trish Highfield	Early childhood teacher, Villawood Detention centre Visitor and refugee advocate
Elenie Poulos	Minister of religion, Uniting Church; Leader, ANCORW Research Ethics Committee.
Nandini Ray	Social Worker /Coordinator, Waterloo Housing Project; Researcher, Women at Risk Program; Sessional tutor, community work.
Eloise Finlay	Social Worker; Researcher Refugees, Women & Disabilities
Olivia Wellesley-Cole	Engineering Manager. Works in community refuge support scheme and leader in the Sierra Leone community in Australia.

CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

Another year of hard slog and great commitment by all of the board members and many volunteers and project staff!

What a year that was! With such world-changing events as we have witnessed this year, we have had cause to question our beliefs, our commitments and our status as a nation. The Australian government and generic (often media-led) community response to the so-called War on Terrorism has distressed many of us and – in most cases – caused us to come on even stronger in our antipathy to the exclusionary politics and inhumane responses we witnessed on almost a daily basis.

Tampa; September 11, 2001; the 'War on Terrorism'; the 'certain maritime incident'; a national election based on racism and fear-mongering... the list continues.

In such a climate, ANCORW needed to take a public stand on many issues and in many different places – and this we did with great success!

We took a lead in responding to the Australian government support of the US military strikes against Afghanistan in the "War on Terrorism", with a call to support the UN mandate and provide adequate support to emergency relief. This was another of many opportunities for us to call on the Australian government to renew its commitment to the letter and spirit of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and to provide all support for finding durable solutions to the increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers resulting from that military response. Unfortunately, our government was, again, found lacking.

There were letters to the editor in different papers, radio interviews, and articles on the human rights of refugees. We also provided much background to the media on refugee women and children, and particularly on Children in detention.

ANCORW provided its' specialist voice at the Women's Constitutional Convention 2002 in Canberra. It was clear that our human rights-based approach is still a new concept for many women's organisations, and much work needs to be done to ensure pressure continues on the Australian government to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women).

We provided letters of support to many locally based Migrant Resource Centres and other specific Community Refugee Settlement Service groups to obtain funding for specialist workers to assist refugees.

As key organisers in a coalition called "The Next Step for Peace", we provided much of the organisation and resourcing for a Peace Picnic, held in October, 2001 at Sydney Olympic Park. This was a fantastic day of many groups and individuals coming together to celebrate our commitment to peace and human rights.

Amongst all of this hard work, we also undertook a major role in the conference, 'The Refugee Convention – Where to from Here?'

ANCORW had a major success in the staging of the Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court, held on December 4, 2001 at the University of Technology, Sydney. This will be a day that will live in many people's memories for many years to come. I urge you all to read the report on this event, and to keep an eye open for the video of the event, which is in production.

In addition, the major research that ANCORW produced in February 2000, the Vietnamese Women Outworker Project, was finally launched by the Department of Industrial Relations! Big cheers could be heard coming from our offices when this happened!

In collaboration with the YWCA, we presented an International Women's Day event on March 8, 2002, which focussed on the plight of refugees. This successful day saw over 300 women join us for lunch and to listen to women speak of their experiences and the importance of the support of women in Australia to the cause.

ANCORW women also attended working groups on arbitrary detention.

An evaluation of our on-going literacy and numeracy program for pre-school children was completed by students Lydia Lin and Amanda Watson. This evaluation will be central to the funding proposals which will have to be presented next year if this program is to continue as the success it has been. Our grateful thanks for the ongoing support of program staff Gemma Murphy, Fadia Aoun and Nouhad Azar, as well as the Auburn Council Library staff – particularly Judy Drayton and Kemal Sedar.

As you are all aware, ANCORW Cooperative Inc. continues to operate on the smell of an oily rag, and yet has some great success

in our chosen area of endeavour. How we all do this by working together so successfully – albeit at the last minute, and with a minor level of hysteria creeping in from time to time – would be worthy of a doctoral thesis, I am sure!

The regular flow of students, board members and volunteers who come through the office have made a huge difference. It is due entirely to the tireless work of all of you who take on responsibilities, volunteer in the office, provide support to one or many of our projects, represent the views of our organisation at local, national, regional and international gatherings, and provide the manual dexterity required of the irregular, but bulky, mailouts! Hopefully, the latest mailout will result in many more members and a renewal of our commitment to each other and to the needs and concerns of refugee women.

Apart from the fantastic support of the individuals, we also have to say a major thank you to the Centre for Refugee Research for continuing to provide us with a home and involving us in many of their own pursuits – it is true that we benefit greatly from our shared commitment.

Thank you all for a truly stunning year of achievement in the face of such difficulty.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with you all.

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa
(a traditional Maori greeting to a gathering, to recognise their input).

Kia kaha (stay strong).

Arohanui (with great love)
Kiri Hata, Chairperson ANCORW

ANCORW'S YEAR AT A GLANCE

July

- ANCORW representatives actively participated in the preparations for the International conference "the Refugee convention Where to from Here" hosted by the Centre for refugee Research in December 2001.
- Assisted the Centre for Refugee Research in researching the needs of aging refugees resettled in Sydney.
- Conducted capacity building training with the Public Tenants Council
- Convened a series of ANCORW Out West meetings with the support of Yolanda Encina at Fairfield City Council to prepare for the Women's court and Refugee conference

August

- Participated in the AWOC (Australian Women's Organising Committee) NGO Meeting held in Canberra prior to Women Speak.
- Co convened the Human right's Workshop at WomenSpeak, National Women's conference

September

- Conducted Lobby Training and Participated in the World Conference Against Racism, Durban, South Africa
- Participated in a Special Meeting of the European union in Den Haag, with representation by Eileen Pittaway
- Participated in the PREEXCOM, UNHCR meeting in Geneva, with representation by Eileen Pittaway

October and November

- The frequency of requests for ANCORW speakers at Public meetings, schools and conferences increases dramatically as a result of both the Tampa and government changes to migration legislation.

December

- ANCORW co-convened the Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Right's Court
- ANCORW board members contributed a series of well-researched papers to the International Refugee conference held at UNSW.
- Certificates of participation awarded to parents and children in the ANCORW and Auburn Library Preschool and parents Literacy Program
- Research Ethics officer appointed.

January/February

- Field trip to refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border
- Field trip to Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya
- Ongoing consultation meetings in Canberra with UNHCR, DIMA and AUSAID on the proposed Women at Risk research and International Refugee conference.
- Commissioned by APWLD to assist with the preparation of Lobby documentation for the WCAR
- Two undergraduate Social Work Students commence research into the resettlement needs of Refugees from Southern Sudan.

March

- Participated in Attorney General's Human Rights Forum, Canberra on behalf of CAPOW (Coalition of Participating Organisations of women.)
- Meeting with DIMIA and UNHCR, Canberra regarding findings of overseas field trips and proposed Women at Risk Research
- ANCORW agrees to be one of several industry partners with the UNSW Centre for Refugee Research in the ARC Women at Risk Research Funding application
- Updated ANCORW Web-page

May/June

- Masters Students undertake Evaluation of the Preschool and Parents Literacy Program
- ANCORW participates in the Refugees and Family Violence meetings convened by the Refugee Council.
- Get a Life Fundraising Campaign and ANCORW Membership Drive
- Participated in YWCA Women's Consortium meeting with representation by Juliana Nkrumah

Pre-School Early Intervention, Literacy and Numeracy Program, Auburn

An ongoing program that provides support at the local level is the Refugee Pre-school and Adult Literacy and Numeracy Program. This is very ably run by Fadia and Gemma (Pre-school teachers) and Nouhad (Adult ESL teacher) in collaboration with the Auburn Library, and with the support of the Auburn City Council and funded by the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme.



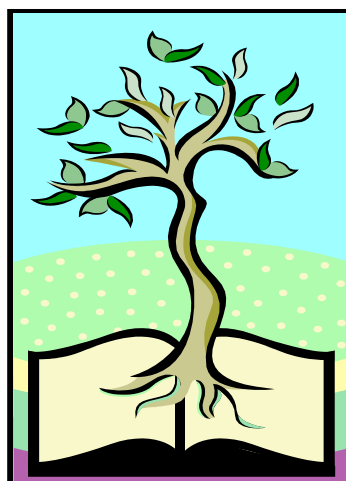
TRAINING

ANCORW and The UNSW Centre for Refugee Research offer a series of short courses, covering the following topics:

- Capacity Building
- Working with Refugee Women
- Working with Refugee Children
- Lobbying
- Human Rights and Development

They are conducted either at the University of New South Wales, or in community locations around Australia and on request across the Asia Pacific Region. For full details of the training courses available see the UNSW Centre for Refugee Research Website.

www.crr.unsw.edu.au



The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court

University of Technology, Sydney Australia
December 4, 2001

The 14th World Court of Women was held in Sydney, Australia on December 4, 2001. It brought together Refugee and Indigenous women to present their stories in the traditional cultural arena of a women's circle. It put the focus on Indigenous traditions and elders, and provided a strongly supportive environment for women to be heard as they cried, laughed, watched, danced and sang their stories of survival.

We who were asked to bear witness to these stories were moved to accept the responsibility placed on us through this shared experience. We will not sit idly by and allow things to happen without response. We are involved. There is only 'us'.

The Vision

The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court provided a space for women to share their stories and their experience of discrimination and oppression, their pain, their hopes and fears, their past and their futures.

Together, we examined the notion of racism as the root cause of the discrimination and the thread which bound together the experience of refugee and Indigenous women. The day allowed us to identify the similarities in the experience of two groups of women, which at first glance appeared quite different. It provided us with the opportunity to tie these threads into ropes of solidarity between the women who suffer from discrimination and oppression and those who can begin to comprehend its origins and causes.

The Court enabled us to challenge the existing human rights paradigm and to explore new ways to ensure that across the world, discrimination and oppression are acknowledged and addressed in all their manifestations. The removal of gender discrimination was acknowledged as a key to a better world for all.

We celebrated with music, poetry, tradition and ceremony, the strength of women in adversity.

Background

Interested women from many different communities provided the organisation and resources from which the Court grew. A series of planning and consultation meetings were held (called "Talanoa", from the Fijian word for storytelling) over nine months, and the concept of an Indigenous circle of elders arose from these meetings.

Once this was floated among refugee and Indigenous communities, there were many who asked to take part - some to testify, and others as workers.

The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court gave women the opportunity to share their stories through personal testimony, song, poetry and ceremony. It was an incredibly moving experience, during which we cried and laughed together, despaired, and celebrated the strength of those who survive human rights abuses, together we created a vision of a better future.

Their stories were told in a circle of elders from the Aboriginal and Maori communities, who created a sacred space of safety and support. These women elders chanted a traditional welcome, and honoured all ancestors and friends who made up our shared histories.

A panel of human rights activists from the region were asked to respond to the testimonies, with a focus on the issues and commenting on the effectiveness of existing human rights instruments to address issues of racism and gender, as well as suggest new paths for the future. There was a balance of activists from Indigenous, community and government sectors.

Due to the overwhelming interest in the Court, it was necessary to provide two sittings - one during the day to allow students and older people to attend, and one in the evening to encourage workers to participate.

Existing group networks were used to promote the Court, with email networking one of the most successful means of drawing participants. The daytime session from 9.30am to 4pm attracted over 270 witnesses... more than the capacity of the venue! The evening session ran from 5.30pm to 9.30pm, and also attracted a near-capacity crowd.

A powerful feature of the event was the ceremony of recognition for the women and their testimonies, and the opportunity for witnesses

to offer their wishes for a better future into stones which have been placed in a cairn to mark the event.

Conveners and Funders

The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court was convened by the Asian Women's Human Rights Council, the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women (ANCORW), the Centre for Refugee Research and the Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre (University of New South Wales). The event was funded by Fondazione Rispetto E Parita (ONLUS) of Italy, and El Taller International, Tunisia.

The funding was used to bring refugee women and human rights activists from the region, and to cover costs of the venue and event. Refugee women from Perth, South Australia, Bougainville and Sierra Leone, and Indigenous women from Queensland, Central Desert area, Melbourne, Sydney and other areas of New South Wales were able to attend to give their testimony.

Resource information and a booklet was produced for every participant, outlining the purpose of the Court, the background to issues of intersectionality between gender and race, and providing information on specific participants and elders. The gumleaf was used as a symbol of Australia and the link between refugee and Indigenous women, and all participants received these leaves as a potent reminder of our links in this country.

Video presentations and links were also produced for use during the day, and the full proceedings were filmed and will be produced into a one hour documentary on the Court.

The Circle of Elders

Senior women in two Indigenous cultures - Aboriginal and Maori - provided a focus for the day with their strength and acceptance of all that was presented. We honour these women as true and strong foundations on which our communities are built.

They included:

- Auntie Ali Golding, an Indigenous woman who is an elder on The Block, an Aboriginal Community housing area in Redfern, Sydney, and is preparing for ordination as a Minister of Religion;
- Auntie Joyce Ingram, an Indigenous woman descendant of the Wunnaroa Nation, and an elder on The Block in Redfern. Auntie Joyce has lived in Redfern all of her life;

- Auntie Sylvia Scott, a Wiradjuri Woman who has lived in Sydney for the past 40 years;
- Auntie Joyce Wymarra, an Indigenous woman of the Torres Strait Islands, who is also now an elder on The Block in Redfern;
- Te Ruinga Haeata, a descendant of the Tainui Iwi (the people tracing their ancestry back to the Tainui 'waka' or canoe. This was one of the seven great canoes to which all Maori trace their lineage), from the Waikato region of Aotearoa / New Zealand;
- Whatuhuia Hona, a descendant of the Te Arawa Iwi (another of the seven great canoes) from Rotorua, Aotearoa / New Zealand;
- Hine Hiku, a descendant of the Tainui Iwi, also from the Waikato region, Aotearoa / New Zealand; and
- Fanny Mikaere, of the Te Arawa Iwi, from Rotorua, Aotearoa / New Zealand.

The evening session was hosted by younger Indigenous activists:

- Pam Greer, an Indigenous woman now living on the Central Coast of New South Wales; and
- Kiri Hata, a Ngai Tai (tribal) woman of the Tainui Iwi, from Torere, Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Women of Courage

Over 30 women gave testimony to the circle of elders on this day. They included:

- Edina Nozica, refugee woman living in Sydney, from Dervnta, Bosnia, who was supported by the Bosnian Women's Choir and their leader, Sladjana Hodic;
- Linda Eddy and Vicki Gillick, Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation, Central Desert region, Australia;
- Lisa Bellear, Goernpil / Stradbroke Island, Queensland;
- Dolma Sangmo, refugee woman from Eastern Tibet;
- Marcelline Tunin, Vito Village, and vice-president of Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom, Bougainville;
- Stella Tunin, student in Queensland, from Bougainville;
- Kuntamari Crofts, student in Victoria, from South Nasioi, Bougainville;
- Fatmatta Sesay, refugee woman living in Germany, from Sierra Leone;
- Graciela Nogues, refugee woman living on Central Coast NSW, from Uruguay;
- Aguil De-chut Deng, refugee woman living in Canberra, from Sudan;

- Bamathy Somasegiam, refugee Tamil woman living in Sydney, from Sri Lanka;
- Samiramis Ziyeh & Marlin Babakhan, the Boghcheh (Bundle) Project;
- Carla Tongun, refugee woman living in Adelaide, from Sudan;
- Donna Ingram, Indigenous woman living in Sydney;
- Sylvia Scott, Wiradjuri woman living in Sydney;
- Joyce Wymarra, Torres Strait Islands woman, living in The Block, Redfern;
- Thelma Quarteley, Torres Strait Islands woman, living in Sydney;
- Sallaymatu (Sallay) Konte / Tigidankay Daramy / Saibatu Kamara, refugee women living in Sydney, from Sierra Leone; and
- Jennifer Deng, practitioner of Falun Dafa living in Sydney, from China.

Human Rights commentators

At the end of each session, some comment and analysis was offered on the issues by the following people:

- Nelia Sancho, LILA Filipina, Philippines;
- Dr Lili Tuwai, Indigenous Activist and Editor, Pacific;
- Alanna Sherry, Advocacy Manager, UNICEF;
- Sally Moyle, Sex Discrimination Unit, HREOC (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission);
- Sue Green, Wiradjuri woman, acting Director, Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre, UNSW;
- Pam Greer, Indigenous Consultant, Central Coast, NSW;
- Eileen Pittaway, Centre for Refugee Research, UNSW.

Conclusion

The event provided a focus on the similarity of effects and experiences for refugee and Indigenous women, from a range of vastly different circumstances.

The human rights paradigm does not allow for the multiple levels of disadvantage and oppression faced by women. It is apparent that our self interest, status, pride and delusions - whether of grandeur or denial - have all played a part in stopping these women telling of their life experiences sooner. We have been complicit in a system which provides little or no opportunity for them to gain redress.

We knew of the rapes and sexual torture. We had heard of them before.

To hear women speak from personal experience, of assault, devastation and death of their husbands and children, friends, parents and siblings, life and culture, told in such chilling detail - in some cases as much as 10 - 15 years after the event - was shocking. Those women who testified were truly courageous.

They are the true heroes. Not for them the race run with millions of dollars of support and sponsorships, nor the adulation of a country or sporting fans watching from the safety and security of their own lounge room.

These women ran in a race for their lives, spurred on by real guns or 100 years of dispossession and colonisation; without support and no clue as to when or where the race would end. They survived.

Did they win? They spoke of guilt at their own survival when so many others did not. They spoke of the pain of loss. The fear for those left behind. The uncertainty of their status and standing in a new culture and place.

We think they are winners. They are here; they survived.

The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court gave us a glimpse of women who are driven. They are making a new life, operating in a foreign culture and language - required to live up to the multiple requirements of the many labels they wear as women.

The women said thank you to those of us who heard them. Thank you for listening to our hearts and minds; for reaching out to us.

The Indigenous elders showed their support, and shared in the burden of pain and suffering. Aunty Ali Golding has undertaken a personal journey of healing for all the women who testified, to return the pain and suffering to the earth. The elders recognised this journey as necessary for so many women who suffer abuses and uncertainties, and who cry out to us in need. The stones, into which the wishes of all who witnessed the event were poured, will be returned to the land as a cairn to mark the Court.

We who witnessed are stronger for the hearing. We laughed and cried, we were shocked and elated. We sang and danced.

We turned the concept of a 'court' into something powerful and healing for us all. And we survived the experience.

Our congratulations and support go to all who took part in the day. You stepped outside your safe anonymity to take part in a sacred circle - a journey of healing.

Of this you can be proud.

Kiri Hata
Chairperson, ANCORW

GET* A LIFE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

(*Girls Education and Training)

Q: What is the biggest single barrier for girls to access education and training in refugee camps?

If you said community attitudes, lack of interest, lack of education programs or no money, you'd be wrong. While these are part of the reason, they are not the biggest single reason. So what is it? Sanitary towels - there aren't any. That's it. Nothing difficult or impossible about it. Just basic and common to every women on the planet.

A: Sanitary towels

There is a massive need for re-useable sanitary towels in every refugee camp around the world. These need to be re-useable because the disposal options are non-existent. It is strictly wash and wear in a refugee camp. The lack of such a basic necessity means that women are confined to their makeshift shelters and homes every month while menstruating. Imagine having to stay home because you did not have access to such a basic need.

No school. No work. No meeting friends for coffee or a chat.

For refugee women, it also means no food (you have to queue at a central place); no cooking; keeping your children confined because you can't keep an eye on them outside, and there are many dangers in these camps; and many other problems. During a recent visit to Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, we were confronted by the situation of the women. We know that the small things are often overlooked in favour of big projects. In this case, it really is a matter of a little going a long way.

Q: What can you do?

You can help girls and women access these most basic rights of education and training.

By giving money for the *GET a Life Project, you will make this happen.

Your donation will be useful in one of two ways:

* \$10 will buy enough re-useable sanitary towels for one woman for a year; and

* \$20 will enable women to use available resources to produce these products for use in the camps, and generate a small business for the women involved. This money can then be used to produce more sanitary towels for more women. The materials are sourced locally, and the women provide the labour. Your donation goes towards paying the women for their work. That money goes to a family to supplement their family food rations, or to provide other urgent and basic necessities.

A: Make a donation. Today.

All of this will ensure that women and girls can go to school; they can be included in any training courses; and most importantly, they can learn new skills that may just ensure the survival of their families and themselves.

Give these girls a future. Help them *GET a Life.

STUDENT FIELDWORK PLACEMENTS

Two undergraduate social work students, Carolyn Jones and David Green completed a fieldwork placement with ANCORW in the first half of 2002.

David commenced his placement in December 2001 and during this time provided substantial assistance to the conveners of the Women's Human Rights' Court and the International Refugee Conference which followed. In the following months David undertook a series of research projects on behalf of ANCORW and The Centre for Refugee Research. These included an excellent research paper on Australia's practice of Interdiction and the impact on refugees of the October 2001 Migration Bills.

Carolyn also undertook a range of research projects for ANCORW and the Centre. Her assistance in preparing the background documentation for the Field Trip to Kenya was invaluable. Together Carolyn and David have undertaken a preliminary study into the resettlement needs of refugees from Southern Sudan in Australia. This report is due to be released on late 2002.

REFUGEE WOMEN AT RISK

Report on a recent visit to Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya

Ever thickening clouds of red dust signal the approach to Kakuma camp Located in the hottest, most isolated and arid part of Kenya's north, this camp is now home to over 90,000 mainly Sudanese and Somali refugees. Conditions for the refugee population are desperate and dangerous. Food and water supplies are completely inadequate and rape and sexual violence are endemic.

The abduction and sale of young girls as brides, the forced marriage of widows and the physical and sexual abuse of those in mixed marriages is commonplace, women are raped and sexually mutilated by gangs of men. Women who are raped by rival groups, especially those who give birth to babies are stigmatised and harassed and are in urgent need of protection. Yet for most of these women there is simply no protection available.

- Protection in the Camp -

Despite the recent establishment of a system of mobile courts and the successful prosecution of some of the perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence, the abuse and violence continue with almost complete impunity. The Jesuit Refugee Service in the Camp manage a Safe Haven for Women. However this excellent and critically important project can only provide safe accommodation to a maximum of 6 women at any one time and is at best a short term solution. The only other option available to women who experience ongoing abuse and harassment is to seek protection in the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) protection area.

The Protection area is a compound enclosed by barbed wire in which women and their families are accommodated in rotting canvas tents. Many women have lived in this protection area for 4- 5 years; some have been there for 8 years. Women confined in this area have no opportunity to access the camp's educational services nor to develop any income generating activities. Although for most of these women resettlement is the only durable solution only very few ever achieve this.

- International Response -

Tragically the experience of women in Kakuma camp is not unique. Despite the increased recognition internationally of the widespread nature of sexual violence against women in conflict and post conflict situations the majority of refugee women around the globe continue to experience these gross violations of their human rights.

To address the protection of refugee women in situations of extreme danger a new resettlement visa category, the 'Women at Risk' category was established by UNHCR in 1988. This program is designed to identify refugee women who are at extreme risk and to fast track their removal to resettlement countries. Australia is one of a small number of resettlement countries including Canada and New Zealand who have included this special category in their resettlement program. However despite determination and goodwill from both the Australian Government and UNHCR the Program has never fulfilled its aims and objectives. Year after year the number of women who enter Australia under this program fall far short of the target.

Why is this the case when there are clearly huge numbers of vulnerable women in refugee situations around the globe?

The Australian National Committee on Refugee Women and the UNSW Centre for Refugee Research are determined to find answers to this question. We are currently engaged in a preliminary research project which aims to understand how this program could be better implemented to meet the needs of vulnerable women around the world. In order to complete this research, which will involve substantial on the ground research in refugee camps around the world including in Kenya and Thailand, financial assistance is urgently required.

All donations are gratefully accepted. For a more detailed report on Kakuma Camp please refer to <http://www.crr.unsw.edu.au>

Thai Burma Border Fieldtrip Report

These briefing notes have been compiled based on two recent field trips to the Thai Burma border. In January 2001 we conducted lobby training with regional women's groups in Chiangmai on behalf of Asia Pacific Women in Law and Development in preparation for the World Conference Against Racism. During this training and in the ensuing preparatory meetings and at the conference itself we worked closely with women from the Burmese Women's Union on regional issues for refugee and migrant women and in particular on the issues facing these groups in Thailand. During this visit we also had the opportunity to meet with a range of Burmese women's activists who had congregated in safe haven an hour outside of Chiangmai for the inaugural meeting of the Women's League of Burma. In January 2002 we returned to Thai Burma border this time visiting refugee camps and centres in Mae Hon Song and Mae Sot.

During these visits Burmese refugees from a range of communities and NGO workers shared with us stories of widespread human rights violations and outlined ways in which the international community, donors and NGOs could assist them. Some of their key concerns are outlined below:

Safety and Status

The safety of Burmese refugees both those living in Thailand and those internally displaced in Burma continues to be of major concern. Thailand remains a reluctant host to the refugees and continues to regard all those who are not directly fleeing conflict as illegal immigrants. Those whom Thailand does allow to remain within its borders are required to live within the so-called "temporary camps" along the border. Those who leave the camps in search of work are regarded as illegal migrant workers. Although

Thailand has recently introduced as system of registration for migrant workers, the system is contingent upon the worker remaining with the employer with whom they are registered. If the worker leaves this employer, regardless of the reasons, which often include exploitation, abuse and sexual violence, the worker faces forced return to Burma. Refugees who have left the camps to find work are forbidden from re-entering the camps.

Basic Needs Food and Health

A medical clinic in Mae Sot run by Dr Cynthia is one of the few places to which those Burmese who are not living in the camps can come for basic health services. Although this centre provides a range of excellent services, conditions are extremely basic and it is far from safe for the many Burmese who travel illegally across the border to visit the clinic. Thai police often hide outside the clinic and we were informed that spies pretending to be refugees were frequently within the clinics dusty compound. Facilities at the clinic are basic, the hospital ward and most of the simple structures are dilapidated, and the labour ward is a dark barn like building.

Those suffering from TB are isolated in a building to one side of the compound and those confined to hospital must be cared for by the relatives. Yet despite the poor conditions, the compound of the clinic is a hive of activity. New structures are being erected, there is an income generation project, which produces the surrounds for pit toilets, and a range of health and educational programs are conducted concurrently in a row of classrooms.

During our visit a group of Backpack Medics/Traditional Birthing attendants who work inside Burma were attending a three-week program of training at the camp. These mainly young women work in difficult and dangerous conditions inside Burma. Every six months they return to the clinic for further training and to collect essential medical supplies. The journey to and from Burma is fraught with danger, they have to walk for many days and then sneak across the border at night. The conditions in which these women work within Burma are also difficult and dangerous. One young woman we spoke with said she had been sick with fear for days at the thought of going back.

Those women we spoke with identified a number of the key difficulties they face. These included:

- (1) The added danger they faced on return to Burma carrying backpacks full of medicines, if they were caught by

the SPDC it is likely they would be killed, as it would be obvious that they were receiving outside aid.

- (2) The requirement that in addition to carrying up to 20 kilos of medicines they are also required to carry in their own food supplies, including sacks of rice. We were advised that this was due to the fact that the project funder (NGO) required receipts for all items purchased and that these were simply not available in villages in Burma. This seemed an absurd requirement given the danger these women faced!
- (3) The terrible food shortages in Burma which lead many villagers to ask them constantly for food and not for medicine. Two of the Medics told us stories of villagers saying to them "If you don't have food then please just give us "DEATH MEDICINE".
- (4) Lacking the skills to address widespread issues of trauma and mental health especially of those women who have been raped and sexually abused.
- (5) The large numbers of women who are pregnant as a result of rape and beg them to perform abortions. The medics have neither the skills nor the facilities in the villages to perform safe abortions. As a result the death rate of women due to self-abortion is reported to be very high.

Safety and Violence Against Women

There were numerous accounts of the rape and sexual abuse of women in both Burma and Thailand. In Burma women are raped and then often murdered by the military, forced to work as porters and held as sex slaves. In Thailand they are raped by Thai officials and in the case of migrant workers by their employers. We were also told of women being held at the registration Centre just over the border in Mae Sot where they were sexually abused by the border police and forced to watch pornographic videos.

During the time of our visit several workers told us about three women who were currently in a camp near Mae Sot. The women had left the camp to work in Thailand and when they sought to return were raped by the Thai police. The women we were told, had gone mad and were being held in a safe house in the camp. Women who work as Backpack medics and assistants to Traditional Birthing attendants within Burma told us similar stories of women in Burma who had been raped and where now seriously traumatised. None felt that they had the skills to assist these women.

Income and Food Security

Lack of income and food security is a major issue both within Burma and Thailand. Although there are a number of organizations working with various Hill Tribe groups along the border on a range of income generating projects including weaving and textile projects, more are needed. Assistance is required in the area of both the provisions of tools and materials, including sewing machine and in the development of external markets for the items produced.

Human rights, gender equity and peace building training

Many of the groups we met with on both visits spoke of the critical importance of Human rights and gender training. Whilst a number of excellent networks exist amongst the various Hill Tribe groups and training is being provided by some excellent organizations, more is needed. The women from the League of Burma spoke particularly about the need to target women in order that they could be truly involved in the Peace Building process.

All too often they told us women held only token positions on committees and UN delegations. One woman who had recently been part of a delegation to the UN reported that the men on the delegation had told her that she didn't need to say anything, "they had just brought her along so that she could wear her ethnic dress and win international sympathy!" Many of the women told us that they felt embarrassed when international NGOs and activists commented that it was ironic that Burmese women were not actively involved in decision making when Aung San Suu Kyi was their leader!

The increasing donor focus on ensuring gender equity in programs has to some degree assisted in increasing the participation of Burmese women. However it must be noted that it is essential that donors and NGOs who include gender equity as a component of their funding criteria include gender and human rights training for both the male and female participants and provide specific support and training to women.

Without this extra support there is a danger that women who are not yet equipped with the appropriate skills will be appointed to positions of authority in organizations in a bid "to keep the donors happy". In these situations even with the best of intentions on the part of donors women may be set up to fail.

Linda Bartolomei and Eileen Pittaway

World Conference Against Racism, Durban 2001

What the hell is Intersectionality?

Or - The Intersectionality of Race and Gender – the reality of many women’s lives

Introduction

In August 2001, I represented ANCORW at the World Conference against Racism, which was held in Durban. Working with Asia Pacific Forum for Women Law and Development (APWLD), I was very active in the Refugee Caucus and in providing lobby training under the auspice of UNIFEM.

In order to lobby effectively for the specific mention of women in the outcomes, it was decided we would use the concept of “intersectionality” as our conceptual framework. A difficult word, but a terrific tool. Working collectively with groups from around the world, we were instrumental in the push to incorporate some good resolutions on refugee women as well as on migrant workers and trafficking into the final outcomes document. These resolutions are both lobby tools for the future and become part of the “soft law” or the putty which helps fills gaps in Human Rights instruments. The concept of intersectionality which I have outlined below was crucial to our success at this meeting.

Intersectionality

Imagine a town – any town, anywhere in the world. It has a main highway, several major cross streets and then a dozen other streets crossing those. Lets name the streets – give the street names a theme. In this case, lets use different types of oppression. The Main highway is “Racism Road”. One cross street might be Colonisation Causeway, then Patriarchy Street. Religion Road, Slavery Street, Culture Cul de Sac, Trafficking Way, Forced Migration Road, Indigenous Exploitation Highway, Globalisation Street, Caste Road, - we could go on naming the town.

Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a developing country or a minority group tries to navigate the main crossing in the town. She has to deal not only with one form of oppression, but with all the forms, those named on the road signs, which link

together to make a double, a triple, a many layered blanket of oppression which impacts on her life. (This example was given by Kimberley Crenshaw in the Womens Caucus at the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR), Durban, 2001.)

Intersectionality was the theme of the Women's Caucus at both the non government Forum WCAR and the focus of non government lobbying at the United Nations Governmental meeting. What it means in practice is that if we just look at racism as a simple issue of dominance of one group over another (such as white over black) on the grounds of ethnic and cultural superiority, then we ignore the complex dynamics of racism. We ignore the structural issues which are embedded in the current world order and socio economic systems. Most importantly we ignore the gendered nature of racism and the many ways in which this impacts on the lives of women in the world.

The major message from the WCAR was that if we are to address the problem then it has to be addressed in its complexity – there is no easy answer. We have to travel every one of those roads and deal with the obstacles we meet.. The lived experience of refugee and indigenous women is based in racism and the many "intersectionalities" reflected in that apparently simple word.

Eileen Pittaway

Board Member Contributions

1) VARIOUS ACTIVITIES – Trish Highfield

On behalf of ANCORW and as a member of the Social Justice in Early Childhood Group and a member of St Kieran's Parish Social Justice Group, the activities performed during the year were:

- Support visits to Villawood IDPC.
- Advocacy on behalf of women and children in DIMIA IDCPS.
- Liaison and information exchange with States Family and Child protection agencies and Professional bodies. Lobby State

and Federal MP's and DIMIA Operational Staff and Senior Executives.

- Contact with journalists and religious leaders. Provide research materials on asylum seekers and detention issues, including "Get a Life" project, ANCORW membership forms and the booklet "The Truth Hurts" Centre for Refugee Research.
- Follow-up on media reports of "incidents" at IDPC's direct with DIMIA on-site Managers to seek reassurance that proper duty of care for women and children, especially unaccompanied minors, is being exercised.
- Talks given ;

Manly Rotary 29/04/02

Petersham TAFE Child Studies Graduation 14/05/02

Social Justice Panel, Children's Services Canterbury City Council 22/05/02

2) BOARD ACTIVITIES – Juliana Nkrumah

- Centre For Conflict Studies, University of Sydney
I represented ANCORW at a seminar here, speaking about Australia and Refugees. My main point was that smaller poorer countries were being forced to accept more refugees that Australia had accepted in total over the past 50 years of experience with refugees. The record was nothing to boast about.
- UTS School of Journalism – "Queue, What Queue?"
The Right to Know Forum arguing that there was no queue for refugees and explaining the real plight of the refugees.
- YWCA Consortium
This meeting was with various women's NGOs to work out the benefits to ANCORW of an involvement with this or any other of OSW's consortia.
- Australian Womenspeak (Canberra)
I attended the NGO meeting prior to this conference. I also presented a paper on refugee women at one of the workshop organised by NCW.

**3) "QUEUE – THERE IS NOT EVEN A COUNTER!!"
(UNHCR official, Sri Lanka)**

INFORMAL REPORT FROM A VISIT TO CAMPS FOR MUSLIMS
DISPLACED FROM THEIR HOME BY CIVIL WAR, PUTTLAM, SRI
LANKA, August 2001

In the on-going debate about Australia's treatment of Asylum seekers, we often hear about the queue jumpers and those who deliberately come to Australia without documents or with false documents, therefore somehow "proving" their criminal and unlawful intent to enter our country illegally – economic migrants seeking a better life and abusing the refugee system whilst doing so. I am currently just briefly in Australia between overseas trips to various refugee camps and conferences. I thought that the following information gathered on a site in Sri Lanka may be of interest, and throw some light on the experience of many of the internally displaced people in the world.

At the moment I do not have time to do a full analysis of the situation in light of international legal instruments and practice. The plight of the people I visited was so at odds with the media picture we have of asylum seekers in Australia I thought it was worth while passing on these observations anyway.

In a recent field trip to Sri Lanka (Aug 2 – 9, 2001) I visited people living in horrendous conditions in temporary camps for Muslims displaced from their homes by the civil war in Sri Lanka. 10 years ago they were driven from their homes with less than 2 hours notice. Their homes were looted, those who did not escape were killed. They escaped to a barren area 3 days walk away, where they were given temporary refuge by the local Muslim community.

Over 10 years later they are still there.

In one town 75 000 people are living in these overcrowded camps. Children born there have known no other life. There is no running water - water is delivered by truck – and the people have to pay for it with what little money they can earn doing menial tasks in the local town. In one camp up to 15 families share each pit toilet. There is little work in the area, which even before the inflow was just able to sustain the 80 000 permanent residents.

People, especially the young men are bored and restless. There is increasing violence and the military and the police frequently raid the camps Young men are killed and imprisoned with impunity.

Young women and widows are at great risk of rape and prostitution. The world food program is cutting food rations, and medication is scarce at local hospitals. While pregnant women in the local towns receive vitamin supplements the women in the camps do not. Babies have very low birth weight and there is an extremely high rate of infant mortality. There is a shortage of teachers for the local schools.

These people are not refugees because they are displaced within their own country. But many of them are at extreme risk of persecution by their own state – in fact are persecuted, imprisoned, killed and raped for daring to try and bring change for their people. They have nothing to go back to – if they did previously own land and homes, these have been legally forfeited because they have not paid rates for over 10 years. They have not been able to. Some are now being forcibly repatriated to designated “cleared” safe areas.

They do not want to go, fearing that they will be once again caught in the buffer zone between two warring parties. While resettlement is not an option, nor even desired by the majority of these people, some, who are deemed to be in extreme danger by UNHCR and other aid workers because of their political activities could be eligible to apply for asylum in other countries on the grounds that it is unsafe for them to remain in their own country, and to have a fair hearing of their cases. It is a small minority of these people who want or need refuge in a new country. Most just want to return home, to be resettled in their own country, so they can resume their lives.

Where is the queue for those people who need to apply for asylum in an orderly fashion? There is none. No queue and no counter.

Local organisations trying to assist these people, including UN agencies, describe the near impossibility of assisting people who are in obvious danger to get out of the camps to safety in second countries. There is no process in place for these people to “join a queue”. If they left the camps and tried to reach embassies or UNHCR in Colombo they would put their lives in danger. They are not allowed to travel and the many roadblocks across Sri Lanka and within Colombo pose extreme danger for these people. It is reported that if they made it to the city they would get a negative reception for the embassies even if they were able to get past the armed guards at the compound gates.

There is no queue and no process and other governments do not want there to be one.

Those avenues which were available in the past are now being closed. Special consideration has been made for people in severe danger "in country" in the past, for example, in El Salvador. It is not currently available for these people. Workers freely discuss how people driven to desperation and despair will do anything to try and get at least one family member out of the country to try and get help, to try and establish a life, to save their lives.

Whole extended families will pool everything they own to raise the money to pay a people smuggler to try and get one person out. They do this knowing that there is at the best a 50% chance of success. They know that many are caught and returned to Sri Lanka, to certain punishment and the family money lost. Some are lost at sea. People, especially women are abused on the journey, the conditions are appalling and some do not survive the journey. They also know that they are likely to receive a less than welcome reception on arrival in a new country.

But still they try – for many it is the last and the only chance. No documents? Of course not. If you escaped from your house in the middle of the night 11 years ago, given two hours notice at the point of a gun to gather your family and go, and have been in a camp ever since, where are your documents? How do you get new ones when you are in a state of war.

These are some of the 'queue jumpers' Mr Ruddocks "abusive illegals".

We are aware of the reception that people like this receive when they reach Australia. Having escaped from hopeless and dangerous situations, they are placed in detention centres which can only increase their trauma. The Government has a stated policy of deterrence, and a commitment to address the root problems of refugee flow. In the case of Sri Lanka, this appears to be that of closing the compound gates, and pretending it is not happening.

In addressing the issues, the debate unfortunately seems to focus on technicalities and restricted definitions of refugees and asylum seekers rather than humanitarian need. Paradoxically, the lack of access to the queues can be seen to foster an environment in which people smugglers flourish

Eileen Pittaway

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all ANCORW members & supporters for their contribution to this report.

We express our thanks for the permission granted to use the photograph shown on the cover of this report.

This photo shows from the left: Marcelline Tunin, Marilyn Havini and Kuntamari Crofts, Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom.

Marcelline and Kuntamari gave testimony in the Women's Human Rights Court and presented at the Refugee Conference held in December 2001. Marilyn was one of the organisers of the Court and donated her beautiful artwork for the program and video.