

MONDAY DEVELOPMENTS

The Latest Issues and Trends in International Development and Humanitarian Assistance



REFUGEE VOICES

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MONDAY DEVELOPMENTS

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Monday Developments is published 20 times a year by the Communications Office of InterAction, the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations. With more than 160 members operating in every developing country, we work to overcome poverty, exclusion and suffering by advancing social justice and basic dignity for all.

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Monday Developments

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IN THIS ISSUE

- 03 A Message from the Interim President
- 03 Perspectives
- 04 Member News
- 12 Straight Talk
- 13 Letter to the Editor
- 20 Position Announcements

- 06 Journey Into Sunset
- 07 Day of the African Child Spotlights Problem of Violence Against Children
- 08 Displaced and Refugee Women and Girls at Risk: Problems and Solutions
- 10 Humanitarian Access is Possible
- 14 The Child Refugees of Darfur



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Photos: (cover) courtesy of Christian Children's Fund, Diana Barnett, Free Burma Rangers, John Stephens, Karl Grobl, Kimberlea Tracey, Sandy Krawitz, Tanya Habjouqa; (above) Jon Warren

A Message from the Interim President

Dear Colleagues:

The work of our members assisting and protecting some of the world's 11 million refugees and 21 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) is tremendous, and often filled with near impossible challenges. Difficulty accessing displaced populations due to a lack of security or government cooperation, working in remote and cross-cultural settings, coordinating efforts with a wide variety of local and international actors, and the ever on-going struggle for funding, are just a few that come to mind.



In this edition we look at the struggles nongovernmental organizations face in addressing a variety of challenges: from reducing vulnerability of women and girls to assisting populations in crises that international aid cannot reach. We review considerations for increasing refugee's rights and for improving the lives of refugee children in Chad – and, by analogy, of children in camps everywhere.

Our feature piece “Refugee Voices on Protection” turns the table on us. We interviewed four former refugees and IDPs about their experiences with international organizations working to protect them. These men and women from Bosnia, Burma, Burundi and Liberia have real insights and advice for us. They should not go unheeded. Recent reports of ongoing protection failures and sexual exploitation of children in some of the camps in which we work, means it is time for us to stop and reflect on what has and has not worked in our efforts to end sexual exploitation. Listening to the people we serve can provide us with important information to help us redesign our protection and assistance strategies.

These important matters involve enormous challenges for all of us as we strive for higher standards for services and accountability. InterAction's PVO standards are designed to ensure that as humanitarian actors, our members have the policies, procedures, and systems in place to mitigate problems before they occur and to address them responsibly and effectively if and when they do happen. Our advocacy and vigilance regarding protection must target not only government officials, U.N. agencies, and donors. It is also incumbent on the humanitarian agencies and workers to commit to creating environments of trust and integrity that promote responsible and accountable behavior that respects and protects each and every beneficiary.

We appreciate your feedback on these important issues. Please send your thoughts and comments to Veronika Martin, Senior Program Manager for Protection and Refugee Affairs, at vmartin@interaction.org

Sincerely,
Julia Taft

perspectives

what are people saying?

“It is not enough to give a refugee or displaced person a cooking pot and a handshake when she. . . I say she because most refugees and displaced people are women. . . heads back to her village. Reintegration requires a serious, long-term commitment not only from humanitarian actors like the UNHCR but also – especially – from the development community. . . Let us be clear. The mechanisms of the international community intended to link emergency relief to development are simply not working. If we are to provide lasting solutions, this gap must be bridged.”

Antonio Guterres, Brussels, 02/21/06

“We work with our partners in non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and government agencies to make this a world where suffering meets a compassionate response, and durable solutions are found for victims of persecution and tyranny.”

Ellen Saurebrey

“I had no husband left, no children, no friends, no roof over my head, no past in short. I never imagined that when I left Rwanda, I would feel abruptly and profoundly torn apart. Especially as the bodies of my husband and children lay in common graves, in this country which never wanted us. As far I was concerned, I had nothing left to do on that soil, which swallowed up my family in an ocean of torture, humiliation, suffering unmatched – perpetrated by our brothers the Rwandans. I thought myself disgusted with my own country.”

Yolande Mukagasana, author and human rights campaigner writes for BBC News Online.

We encourage letters to the editor.
Write to us: publications@interaction.org

InterAction Members Respond to Indonesia Earthquake

A powerful earthquake struck central Java in Indonesia on Saturday May 27, 2006, injuring and killing thousands of people and leaving chaos and destruction in its wake. An estimated 35,000 buildings have been destroyed, and as many as 100,000 people may be homeless, with several thousand feared dead.

Electricity and communication have been cut in many areas, access to food and basic supplies is difficult, and there is urgent need for emergency workers and supplies. The government of Indonesia has declared a three-month emergency period, and estimates that nearly \$100 million will be needed to provide food, health care, and shelter, and then start reconstruction.

At press time, an estimated 34 InterAction member agencies were responding to this crisis. Many had been operating in the region since the December 2004 tsunami. InterAction will continue to monitor this crisis as new developments arise. Please visit www.interaction.org for the latest information.

PATH Joins InterAction Membership

InterAction is pleased to welcome PATH as its newest member organization. PATH is an international, nonprofit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions, enabling communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health. By collaborating with diverse public- and private-sector partners, PATH helps provide appropriate health technologies and vital strategies that change the way people think and act. PATH improves global health and well-being.

MDRI Publishes Report on Abuse in Romanian Institutions

Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI) has found children with disabilities hidden and wasting away, near death, in Romania's adult psychiatric facilities. A report released by MDRI, *Hidden Suffering: Romania's Segregation and Abuse of Infants and Children with Disabilities*, describes teenagers weighing no more than 27 pounds. Some children are tied down with bedsheets, their arms and legs twisted and left to atrophy.

Despite Romanian government claims that it has ended the placement of babies in institutions, MDRI found infants languishing in a medical facility so poorly staffed that the children never leave their cribs. Many of these children have no identity papers. Officially, they do not exist.

These shocking revelations come at a time when Romania, in its effort to join the European Union, is under pressure to reduce the number of children in institutions. Romanian officials admitted to MDRI that they had no idea how many children with disabilities are in adult facilities.

The full report can be found at www.mdri.org

Save the Children Issues Report on Newborn Mortality

Of more than 10 million children under the age of five who die each year, about one in five – an estimated two million babies – die within the first 24 hours of life, according to the seventh

annual State of the World's Mothers report issued by Save the Children. According to the report, an additional one million babies die during days two through seven. A total of four million babies die during the first month of life.

"The most simple health measures taken for granted in the United States can mean the difference between life and death for these babies," said Save the Children President and CEO Charles McCormack. "Low-cost interventions such as immunizing women against tetanus and providing a skilled attendant at birth could reduce newborn deaths by as much as 70 percent if provided universally."

The report notes that most newborn deaths are the result of preventable or treatable causes such as infections, complications at birth and low birth weight.

Nancy Aossey Named CEO of the Year

Nancy Aossey, President and CEO of International Medical Corps, was named CEO of the Year by the Los Angeles Business Journal. Aossey was selected from a group of 48 other nominees representing a wide range of professions at the publication's 15th annual "Women Making a Difference" luncheon in downtown Los Angeles.

Since joining IMC shortly after its inception in 1986, Aossey has shepherded the organization from a three-employee start-up to a \$100-million-plus relief organization with more than 4,000 volunteers and staff working in 21 countries. She has been instrumental in building IMC and its operations into a highly respected humanitarian agency, establishing IMC as a leader in crisis response and capacity building in areas worldwide.

Action Aid International USA Names New Executive Director

Action Aid International USA has named Peter O'Driscoll as its new Executive Director. Mr. O'Driscoll replaces Atila Roque, who is returning to Brazil after leading the organization for three years.

Mr. O'Driscoll's experience has ranged from managing a refugee relief and development organization in conflict-torn El Salvador to creating an international network that links farm, labor, environment, consumer, church and development agencies worldwide on issues of food and corporate accountability. His work with social entrepreneurs familiarized him with important work throughout Latin America. He is especially enthusiastic about Action Aid International USA's decision to invest in building strong practical alliances on common issues between organized constituencies in the United States and their counterparts in the global South. Mr. O'Driscoll is looking forward to building bridges that lead to greater gains for the poor and excluded in the U.S. and abroad.

Compiled and edited by Robyn Shepherd, InterAction

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A MEMBER OF
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By Kimberly Abbott

journey into sunset

“We haven’t heard about this particular conflict because there aren’t massive camps of starving people where you can see pictures of babies that are dying as the cameras mark their last seconds on earth. We haven’t seen the kind of massive military engagement that might bring attention to a particular crisis. This is a slow bleeding emergency, two decades worth of slow death and rapid displacement. Nearly everyone in the entire Northern part of Uganda has been displaced from their homes and they suffer a quiet emergency.”

John Prendergast, Senior Adviser, International Crisis Group

Each night in Northern Uganda, children flee their homes seeking refuge from the Lords Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group that has kidnapped more than 30,000 children over the past two decades. Once in their grip, the LRA robs these children of their innocence, forcing them to commit horrible atrocities – or be killed. Emmy Award winning director Rick Wilkinson, John Prendergast of the International Crisis Group, and acclaimed actor Don Cheadle and his family set out to tell their story. *Journey Into Sunset* is currently showing in film festivals nationwide. We sat down with Wilkinson to talk about his film, and what he learned while making it.

What are your hopes for this film?

My hopes for the film are fairly simple: get it seen by as many people as possible in order to turn a larger light to what’s happening in Northern Uganda.

What did you want to capture when you traveled to Uganda to make this film?

We hoped to capture the reality of daily life for these kids, their families, their communities. We hoped to show the true faces of these child-soldiers, these child-killers. We hoped to tell their story through the eyes of an African American family, the Cheadles. And we hoped to show that there is actually hope. People in Uganda, and now the world, are talking. They have to start somewhere.

How did you feel when you arrived in the country, and when you first met former child soldiers and other victims?

I’ve been to Somalia at the height of civil war and Rwanda during the genocide, so arriving in Gulu, where we did our shooting was really no big deal. It was really just another medium-sized African city to me. Only when the children started streaming into town after sunset and when we went to one of the camps where they must sleep, did the reality of the situation really dawn on me. The former fighters were really frightening. Not because they represented a threat to us, but because they had done things – killings, beating, mutilations – that kids don’t do. Over the course of my career as a journalist and filmmaker I’ve heard people talking about the awful things they’ve done, but

never have I heard those kinds of things actually come out of the proverbial mouths of babes.

It is hard for many Americans to identify with the conflict in Northern Uganda and other crises around the world because they think the people involved are so different, the places so distant. What do you say to them, especially if they are hearing about this conflict for the first time?

I’ve found that, without exception, people who have seen the film are moved, or shaken or in some way affected by it. It’s very hard for us to believe that this sort of thing is happening right now.

What seems to resonate most with audiences?

Two things stun people who see the film the most. First is the fact that this has been going on for 20 years and they’ve never heard about it. People are generally smart and well informed, but this story just blindsides them with the numbers involved. Second is how they respond to the former soldiers. We as Americans – as humans – are just not prepared to hear a little boy say he killed people with a club. Or to hear a little girl tell us that she killed captives. It freaks us out. It upsets us to know that this could happen. As well it should.

What is one thing you want people to come away with after seeing this film?

I simply want them to see that there are other realities in this world beyond what we pay for a gallon of gas. Yes, gas prices are important, but murderous children in Uganda are also important. As is the fact that so many must flee each night to keep from being turned into killers is important. It’s piece of the world we live in. Even if we can’t fix it overnight, it is still important to know that it’s there. Awareness is a good thing.

What did you take away from this experience personally?

Honestly, it showed me one more example of how awful things can be for folks. This isn’t about getting into a car accident. This is much more scary and primal and basic: steal a child and turn him or her into a killer. That’s pretty awful. I could only shake my head, make my film and hope for the best.

Kimberly Abbott is the Media Adviser for North America for the International Crisis Group. Questions and comments should be sent to kabbott@crisisgroup.org. Photos: courtesy of Rick Wilkinson.



“The Children of Northern Uganda, most face a bleak future with fear and the threat of violence arriving each sunset. Others wrestle with what they’ve done and look to the next day with some hope in their hearts. Somehow for all they’ve been through, these kids don’t seem devastated beyond repair. With dreams, nothing too big or flashy: to be a loving parent, to be a teacher, to be at peace, to go home again.”

Don Cheadle

Day of the African Child Spotlights Problem of Violence Against Children

On June 16, countries throughout the world will commemorate the Day of the African Child by focusing attention on both the difficulties and achievements facing youth in Africa today. This will be the fifteenth observance of the day, which was created to memorialize children killed in a march in Soweto, South Africa in 1976 while protesting for their right to a decent education.

2006 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Soweto killings, and the theme chosen for this year is "Stop the Violence Against Children." Many events are being planned through local UNICEF offices in Johannesburg, near the Soweto neighborhood. South Africa's Thuthuzela Care Centers have also been offering models of good practice in caring for children and women who have been raped, and UNICEF will draw attention to the work done in these centers.

Elsewhere, observances of the day in Kenya will include the launch of a campaign to end increasing cases of the rape, murder and neglect of children. The campaign hopes to raise \$1 million to provide care and services for 550,000 vulnerable children. UNICEF will also release a video focusing on sexual violence and ex-child soldiers in Sierra Leone.

The U.N. initiated the Study on Violence Against Children in 2003. The final study will be presented this October. One of the most egregious examples of violence against children is in Northern Uganda. Despite much progress in children's welfare throughout the rest of the country, children in the north are often kidnapped and forced into service with the rebel militia, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Those who are taken are often drugged and forced to commit brutal acts of violence against civilians — including their own families. Girls are often forced to become sex slaves of militia members.

Even after hostilities end, children still suffer in the aftermath of conflict. Such is the case in Liberia, where the recently ended civil war resulted in a depleted infrastructure that had a severely detrimental effect on education and medical services. Angola is another example. Although that country's long-running civil war ended four years ago, Angola's child mortality rate is extremely high, with one in four children dying before the age of five. Landmines continue to be a threat, as does disease and malnutrition. A recent cholera outbreak has complicated efforts. "We could say that Angola is the worst country in which to be a child," said UNICEF Representative Mario Ferrari last year. "We face a huge challenge to help Angola rebuild, step by step."

Children in Africa face other difficulties as well, including HIV/AIDS and famine. Malnutrition is particularly an issue in the drought-stricken Horn of Africa, where UNICEF warns 40,000 children could face death, despite heavy rains. Severe drought has affected much of the nomad population in the region, and lack of funding and services has contributed to the severity of the crisis.

But there are positive developments for the African child. In Cote d'Ivoire, a country struggling to emerge from conflict, 80,000 students will be able to take their exams after waiting for more than two years to complete their education. Over a million children had been denied access to schooling due to the conflict, during which many teachers fled. Please visit www.interaction.org or www.unicef.org for further updates.



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Sudan 2004



Displaced and Refugee Women and Girls at Risk: Problems and Solutions

By Dale Buscher and Megan McKenna



Displaced and refugee women and girls are often resilient survivors, courageous protectors and untiring caregivers. But they also face risks unique to their gender and the instability of their lives, including rape and other forms of gender-based violence, forced labor and involuntary recruitment. Women and girls are vulnerable at all stages of displacement: during flight, during displacement and upon return/reintegration. These vulnerabilities must be understood in order to address their needs and to enhance protection.

Displaced girls, because of their age, developmental stage and maturity, can fall prey to exploitation, trafficking, coercion and manipulation. They may not have the power or confidence to say no to risky situations, or may see older men as protectors, providers and “sugar daddies,” without fully understanding the risks involved. As such, displaced girls may be susceptible to engaging in sexual relationships in return for money, food or a job. They are less likely than boys to have received education, and may not know about sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Girls are also more vulnerable than boys to mistreatment and recruitment by traffickers. At times they are abducted or recruited by armed factions to serve as cooks, porters, sex slaves, temporary “wives” and combatants. Displaced girls also are often burdened with overwhelming responsibilities: caring for siblings or at times the entire family, and performing laborious domestic chores. As a result, they may be unable to attend school or participate in normal developmental activities that help mitigate their vulnerability.

Refugee and displaced women and girls who live in cities also face significant risks because they often receive little or no assistance. Urban refugees generally live in the poorest areas of a city, on the margins of societies and in cultures they often do not understand. It is much more difficult for assistance provid-

ers and human rights workers to identify, monitor and support displaced persons in urban areas than in refugee and displaced persons camps. They may be hidden among already underserved, poor local populations in shantytowns, or scattered over broad, densely populated urban areas with limited infrastructure such as reliable, affordable transportation to assistance agencies. It is also difficult to engage the displaced community in, for example, creating leadership structures and conducting participatory assessments in a concerted and sustained manner. As a result, displaced women and girls are vulnerable to exploitation by landlords, employers and members of the host community who prey on their lack of legal status and support systems.

Research has repeatedly shown that internally displaced persons (IDPs) receive far less attention, fewer resources and subsequently far fewer services than refugees. They do not fall under the protection mandate of a single agency and do not have an international convention that delineates their rights under international law. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are, however, widely accepted as the moral framework for IDP protection. Their situation is further complicated by the issue of state sovereignty, which may impact the ability of international organizations to assist IDPs when the state, for example, is persecuting or causing displacement and denies access and the delivery of assistance. Often few staff from the international community are present in IDP situations and donor governments have been less generous in their funding of services and programs. IDPs’ protection needs are often secondary to their basic survival needs and the results are serious – as the widespread rape of IDP women and girls in Darfur demonstrates.

Halima Muhammed Abakar, a displaced woman who has lived in the Kalma IDP camp in Darfur for three years, explained the routine violence displaced women and girls face. “We have no

food, no safety. Yesterday, four women were raped when they went to get firewood. We are so afraid.”

While the gender violence in Darfur highlights how difficult it can be to protect the displaced, it also illustrates how much needs to be done to improve the protection of displaced and refugee women and girls worldwide.

Every day, for example, millions of displaced and refugee women and girls in conflict areas must collect and sell firewood in dangerous conditions, and are at risk of rape, assault, abduction, theft and even death. They have no choice – their families depend on firewood for cooking and the income it provides to survive.

This is one protection issue that the international community can address now. The United Nations should consider providing fuel to displaced and refugee families in the early days of an emergency. National and international security forces should provide transportation to firewood collection sites or routinely patrol the routes to them. Humanitarian agencies should promote alternative fuels and fuel-efficient technologies to lessen the need for firewood. These solutions must be coupled with income generation activities so displaced women and girls are not forced into life-threatening situations. All efforts must be coordinated by a single agency and implemented in consultation with refugee and displaced women. This, however, is only part of a much broader strategy to change the attitudes and behaviors of the perpetrators, as well as those of the societies that allow them to go unpunished.

The international community can do a lot to mitigate these and other protection risks, with input from refugee women and girls themselves (please see sidebar). They are willing and able to work towards their own protection, but it is up to the international community to do its part so these women and girls can help themselves.

Dale Buscher is Director, Participation and Protection Program, and Megan McKenna is Senior Coordinator, Media Communications, at the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. Email comments and questions to Megan McKenna at meganm@womenscommission.org. Photo: courtesy of Julia Matthews/Women's Commission.

THE BASICS What is a refugee? What is an IDP?

A refugee is a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...” – 1951 Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are individuals who have been forced to flee their homes for many of the same reasons as refugees, but who have not crossed an international border.

A refugee is entitled to international protection under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Moreover, enshrined in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights is the right “to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” Internally displaced persons are not afforded the protections provided in international refugee law, but protection of their fundamental human rights is grounded in international human rights and humanitarian law.

Protection Solutions During Displacement

- ✎ Promote women's active and equal participation in planning and developing programs and decisions affecting them.
- ✎ Engage displaced communities in risk identification and in the design and implementation of solutions.
- ✎ Ensure a fuel strategy is in place in each emergency setting that includes the identification of a coordinating organization and that is based on enhancing the protection of women and girls.
- ✎ Train camp security personnel in refugee rights, addressing gender-based violence and reporting/response mechanisms; include female security personnel on all security contingents.
- ✎ Maintain a visible presence of female staff in refugee and IDP camps, as well as among peacekeepers, UN and NGO staff members.
- ✎ Create short-term protected areas/women's centers for survivors of GBV while longer-term more durable solutions are found.
- ✎ Ensure individual documentation and registration.
- ✎ Ensure access to health care, including reproductive health care, education and training programs, and income generation activities.
- ✎ Train local and international humanitarian and security staff on the Codes of Conduct.
- ✎ Create mechanisms and guidelines to monitor protection.
- ✎ Ensure asylum claims recognize gender persecution.
- ✎ Pursue emergency relocation or durable solutions for displaced women and girls at heightened risk.

Humanitarian Access is Possible

By Casey A. Barrs

This article describes a proposed method of aid called Locally Led Advance Mobile Aid. LLAMA would deploy when civilians trapped in conflict are dying and the chance of reaching them in time with conventional relief and protection is unlikely. Nearly four years of research have culminated in a monograph supported by thousands of citations, most of which come from field-based sources. The monograph details many mechanisms addressing security, legal principle, accountability, and synchronicity with conventional efforts. LLAMA was developed under The Cuny Center, the successor organization to Intertect, founded by Fred Cuny, the renowned aid worker who died in Chechnya in 1995. This article describes how LLAMA teams could help aid agencies during the most critical transitions and gaps in their work. Its aim is to leave readers with new hope for reaching those “unreachable” populations and with an interest in learning more about LLAMA.

Today’s trends demand more options for gaining humanitarian access: endangered civilians find it increasingly hard to get out of their strife-torn homelands to asylum and relief agencies find it increasingly hard to get in. Nevertheless, it is possible to get aid to the internally displaced before a “permissive environment” is established.

The aid described here would be conducted by LLAMA rather than conventional agencies. Yet the possibilities for collaboration between both are enormous. The essential purpose of LLAMA is to help teams of locals return home to aid their own people. LLAMA would recruit, train and equip those teams, with discreet but vital support from patrons in the aid community. In turn, LLAMA would help the aid community during its most difficult transitions and gaps in emergency response.

How would these teams survive and serve in places where security or the consent to access are lacking? LLAMA is not based on the large-scale, fixed-structure, foreign-led, and formally engaged delivery of aid with which we are familiar. Instead it is small-scale, mobile, locally led, and disengaged from groups or governments that abuse civilians and the aid intended for them. The operating profile and field craft this requires is not new; it is found in ample but scattered precedents and practice.

LLAMA draws on field craft of small unit operation in military doctrine (particularly information management and communications, as well as safe encampment, movement, and threat response). It borrows from historical studies of underground and resistance movements. Such movements and the local auxiliaries they depend on consist mostly of civilians. This reminds us that civilians know, when provided structure, how to survive overwhelming odds. LLAMA also draws on the experience of today’s little-known organizations that combine humanitarian and military practice: some faith-based and others for-profit, they routinely get life-saving aid to those whom we thought it impossible to reach.

LLAMA also builds on innovations in aid work. One is the growing use of cash transfers by agencies to quickly infuse aid into emergencies. Another is aid work by “remote control” which to some degree is locally led. Innovations also include nonconsensual and nontransparent tactics that even our most respected aid agencies sometimes feel they must adopt in order to survive and serve. This refers to a growing range of evasive measures, cross border work without permission, siege busting, individual rescues, undisclosed reporting on rights abuses, and many more acts aimed at saving lives.

Finally, LLAMA learns from the “victims” themselves through cultural studies of civilian survival. Families and communities trying to avoid violence always create social, economic, and security strategies and structures. Through their own deadly learning curve they come to know which profile and field craft will keep them alive. In conflicts around the world trapped civilians struggle with varying degrees of success to survive. They are already attempting forms of locally led advance mobile aid – we simply have not realized how much we can support them.

All the separate components of the archetypal LLAMA model have been proven. Its ethical principles have ample precedent. There is a rich history of discreet humanitarian aid. This type of aid assistance, which does not require the consent of abusive powers, has saved many hundreds of thousands of lives. LLAMA starts with that moral bedrock but then builds something much stronger. LLAMA’s profile and field craft would endow it with an entirely new level of operational freedom that would be very advantageous when trying to pursue aid in a neutral, impartial, and independent manner. Remember how difficult it is to target those most in need when we are risk-averse, permission-bound, and donor-driven.

LLAMA would be pursued in tandem with conventional efforts to reach trapped civilians. It has three equally important parts: the indigenous LLAMA teams that would bear the risks and responsibilities on the ground, the Training and Support Units (TSUs) that would recruit, train, equip, deploy, and support those teams, and the headquarters that would assemble the TSUs and guide the LLAMA organization over the long term.

The key to imagining LLAMA’s potential is to remember that history shows we can always find civilians who have the integrity to serve others and the capacity to learn field craft needed to give them a reasonable chance of success. Civilian LLAMA teams could help when:

☞ Your aid agency is faced with evacuation. This is the most difficult moment you face: deciding whether or not to pull out. Too often aid agencies must abandon their staff, partners, and beneficiaries with no preparation for the coming violence. If you are being forced out, LLAMA teams would help them prepare. Though our local staff and partners are usually quite

“Today’s trends demand more options for gaining humanitarian access.”

THE BASICS Why are refugees and IDPs displaced?

Some refugees and IDPs flee their homes due to conflict, while others are trying to escape persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a person can also be considered an IDP if he/she is displaced due to a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or a flood. However, while people may cross international borders due to natural disasters or to poor economic or other conditions, they do not qualify for refugee status under the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, which stipulate that a person must be fleeing persecution to qualify as a refugee.

THE BASICS How many refugees and IDPs are there?

According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrant's 2005 World Refugee Survey, there were 11.5 million refugees and 21.3 million IDPs worldwide. More than one-third of all refugees, or 3.5 million individuals, are in Africa. Africa also hosts 13 million IDPs, more than half of the world's internally displaced population. Eighty percent of all refugees and IDPs are women and children. Over seven million refugees have spent at least 10 years in camps.

adept at navigating civil strife, they too have conventional practices and profiles that can make them easy targets. LLAMA's aim would be to help them "retool" or transition to more dispersed, mobile, and discreet forms of service.

- ✂ Your peace building or conflict prevention group has local counterparts at risk. Too often we support local peace efforts without also helping our counterparts on the ground prepare for the possible failure or backlash of their work. LLAMA teams would help them work from a safer position.
- ✂ Your aid agency is unable to move resources into a conflict zone. This is the deadly period during which outside aid is absent. It can last months or years. LLAMA would be on location working with local leaders to help increase safety and self-reliance among the populace. Even if your agency were locked out of the conflict zone, you could still indirectly help trapped civilians by using LLAMA as a conduit.
- ✂ Your government wants to aid endangered civilians but cannot publicly do so. States often support relief and protection through private or discreet mechanisms. History shows that when these mechanisms are available for outsourcing, donor governments are at times willing to move large amounts of funding through them. LLAMA could serve as one such mechanism.
- ✂ Your early warning or advocacy organization cannot access or assess places of human rights abuse. LLAMA teams on the ground could document and transmit "from the inside out" facts with which your organization can better sound the alarm.
- ✂ Your aid agency will soon enter a complex emergency about which you know little. LLAMA teams could gather baseline data that help you calibrate your interventions. Teams would tell you about the population's condition and location so you can arrive on site with the greatest impact and least hazard.
- ✂ You are a peacekeeping commander or a camp director concerned about civilians who are unable to reach your refuge. LLAMA teams would gather and share information with you

about populations outside the periphery of your work. They could escort civilians to reception points coordinated with you. They could also inform peacekeepers of where displaced civilians need protection in-situ.

- ✂ Your aid agency is worried that civilians will soon leave international care – and walk back into danger. Periods of international care offer a chance to prepare civilians for future conflict. Sometimes that conflict is visited upon them sooner than expected: refugee camps in asylum countries close prematurely or safe havens in the affected country collapse. And many times returnees decide to go home even if conditions are unstable. LLAMA would teach them rudimentary survival and security skills, grafting onto what they already know and do.

The ways in which LLAMA would interface with conventional agencies would vary. In some cases LLAMA would initiate consultations with interested agencies. LLAMA would present a "crisis and response" forecast based both on its own unique capacity for humanitarian intelligence gathering and information pooled by other early warning and monitoring partners. That forecast might include a finding that LLAMA deployment into a nascent crisis would be feasible. If so, LLAMA would bring to the table not merely information but actionable information.

In other cases, aid agencies might initiate talks with LLAMA because they face a deadly gap or transition in their work and want more options than are normally available to them. They could complement LLAMA's services with monetary or vital non-monetary support (i.e. sharing bottlenecked supplies, information, contacts or partners, and referrals for recruitment). Whether their agreed upon cooperation is contractual or informal matters little. What counts is that they would be working together on creative responses to some of the gravest humanitarian problems we face today.

Casey Barrs is a Protection Research Fellow with The Cuny Center. Questions, comments, and requests for the full monograph should be sent to cbarrs@mt.gov.

Refugee “warehousing” has become a topic of greater concern in recent years, although it remains less well known in the broader humanitarian assistance community. In an effort to introduce the concept to a wider range of actors, InterAction recently asked some of the key organizations to offer their thoughts on recent efforts to improve refugees’ ability to exercise their rights while living in situations involving protracted displacement.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

An increasing number of host states respond to protracted refugee situations by containing refugees in isolated and insecure camps, often restricting their access to education and employment. This trend, recently termed ‘warehousing’, began receiving wider attention in 2000 and 2001 when UNHCR, supported by renewed donor interest in the question, commissioned a number of studies to better understand the dynamics and implications of contemporary long-term refugee problems. One of the key lessons learned is that humanitarian organizations cannot address the political dimensions of protracted refugee situations on their own: situations that currently involve more than five million people in some 33 locations. While refugee protection agencies must remain sensitive to host governments’ security concerns, actions by humanitarian agencies without the support of both development agencies and the U.N. Security Council will not result in truly comprehensive solutions. As long as discussions on protracted refugee situations remain exclusively within the humanitarian community and do not engage the broader peace, security and development communities, they will have limited impact.

State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees & Migration

At the State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration we are deeply concerned with addressing the needs of people living in protracted refugee situations. We continue our intensive efforts to find durable solutions for refugees, as this is the only means to end protracted refugee situations. We also work diplomatically to promote refugee rights and self-sufficiency whenever possible. At the same time, we have added self-reliance as a priority policy interest in our 2006 Framework for Cooperation with UNHCR and are working with UNHCR to develop programming that address the specific needs of this population. This would include nongovernmental organization (NGO) protection programming, and we recently posted a Re-

quest for Proposals on grants.gov (FY 2006 PRM Guidelines for Strategic Global Priorities Projects) to include such programs. Although resources are extremely limited, we will consider all proposals submitted, and expect that this will provide further opportunities for dialogue with partners on ways forward in addressing protracted refugee situations in this and future fiscal years.

Refugees International

The refugee rights provisions of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees reflect the assumptions of the time: that refugees would be fleeing from oppressive states into wealthy democratic countries with a respect for basic rights. The reality of the refugee flows over the past two decades is quite different, with refugees struggling to find a safe haven in countries almost as poor and as embattled as those from which they fled. In this context, the only meaningful way to realize refugee rights in the short term is to focus on ensuring that basic service standards are met in camps, while linking rights to employment and movement with support for development activities in the surrounding communities. As the recent cases of Afghanistan, Angola, Liberia, and Sudan demonstrate, ultimately the most effective way to address protracted refugee situations is to resolve the conflicts in the countries of origin, which will allow the refugees to return. This requires substantial diplomatic, political, and financial investment in peace-building and reconciliation.

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

The first reference to “warehousing” in the context of refugees was made in 1988 by High Commissioner for Refugees Jean-Pierre Hocké when he noted, “Far too many of them are virtually ‘warehoused’ in a state of near-total dependence.” The drafters of the 1951 Convention framed it as a bill of rights – to work, practice professions, run businesses, own property, move about freely, and choose their place of residence, not once using the word “camp.” Countries and international institutions have focused on durable solutions, but largely set aside the rights of refugees to live as normal a life as possible while in exile – even as the duration of refugee situations has grown to an average of 17 years. Durable solutions are the ultimate desideratum in refugee situations, but the Convention does not discuss them except to identify them as conditions under which beneficiaries cease to be refugees. The present international warehousing campaign focuses on the content of refugee protection while refugees remain refugees. It also seeks to make international responsibility sharing a reality through the collaboration of civil society agents in both donor and host nations to ensure that refugees enjoy their rights wherever they may be and that all nations participate in their protection.

Steve Hansch, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for the Study of International Migration and Adjunct Faculty at Georgetown University

The warehousing issue is compelling as a way to educate the public about the fate of many refugees. It captures the dilemma that many refugees face: whether to stay in concentrated camps, where their dignity, skills and livelihoods will suffer, or to enter the informal economy, where they will be cut off from aid and

MCA Falls Short on Refugees' Rights and Development Potential

U.N. protection. But warehousing is not a new problem and it has received significant attention. For decades, UNHCR and most humanitarian NGOs have made finding durable solutions a top priority: solutions to get people out of camps and either returned safely home or safely settled somewhere else.

The main problem is the host governments that segregate people into camps rather than giving them access to opportunities to integrate into the local society and economy. Host governments sometimes bar such access in response to voters' fears and myths about refugees – problems that we also face in the United States. Not all warehoused camps are closed and inhumane. But many governments feel that they have to draw the line somewhere, creating some prison-like conditions to signal that not all immigrants or asylum-seekers can have whatever they want.

One could concentrate on the problems of the arguably larger numbers of refugees who are not in camps, receive no assistance and are not granted refugee status. You would be hard-pressed to find a refugee in “warehoused” camps who does not have family or close friends who are out of the camps, living and working as informal immigrants. Typically, those who stay in camps stay as part of a choice to keep a certain level of cohesion with others who are grateful for the protection and aid that comes with the camps and who are oriented toward being ready to return home “as soon as conditions change and it is safe.”

Dear Editor:

Of the world's 12 million refugees, nearly 8 million have been “warehoused” – confined to camps or otherwise denied basic rights to live freely and earn livelihoods – in situations lasting five years or more, sometimes generations. This is not only a violation of human rights but also a waste of human potential and a constraint on development.

The Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) was to reward countries that govern justly, promote economic freedom, invest in people, and engage civil society in development plans. These features could contribute to the protection of refugees' rights as well but this has not happened for four major reasons:

- 1) Inconsistent consideration of refugees' human rights under the Civil Liberties indicator: the Bush Administration takes its ratings on this indicator from Freedom House, which does excellent work in human rights documentation in most areas. Its reporting on the human rights of refugees, however, is uneven. Tanzania's refugee rights violations – from refolement and arbitrary detention, to work and movement restrictions – were terrible in 2004, but Freedom House made no mention of that fact.
- 2) The Regulatory Quality indicator does not take into account the rights of refugees to engage in economic activity and lacks transparency in its assessment. The indicator measures the burden of regulations on business, including restrictions on ownership by non-residents and on the labor market. The World Bank Institute compiles the ratings on Regulatory Quality from up to 15 different sources, most not publicly available. Are they considering refugee rights? The available information shows they are not.
- 3) Citizen-centric language in Administration guidance frequently refers to beneficiaries and participants as “citizens” rather than people or individuals, persuading governments that, in the words of a Tanzanian official, “MCA is not about refugees!” This undermines civil society efforts in refugee and hosting communities to work together for rights-friendly integrative projects.
- 4) Failure to fund local civil society participation in the process to broaden recipient country “buy in” beyond narrow elites and deepen constituencies for good policies: civil society solidarity with refugees is also crucial for their protection. The Bush Administration has authority and resources to fund this but has resisted doing so.

With a few minor changes to the underlying law, Congress can help. The Millennium Challenge Re-authorization Act of 2005 (HR 4014) would: expressly add “refugees” as persons to whose human and civil rights eligible countries must have a demonstrated commitment; and replace “citizens” with “individuals” where the Act lists those whose participation in trade and markets eligible countries must encourage.

Finally, Congress should replace references to “investment in the people” (emphasis added) in Section 7702(8) with the more inclusive “investment in people” throughout.

Many MCA eligible countries will host refugees for the foreseeable future. Development strategies in such countries must take the potential economic activity of refugees into account. Development aid must not leave people who fled persecution and violence indefinitely warehoused in enforced idleness.

More information is available on the Relief-to-Development page of the campaign to end the warehousing of refugees website: www.refugees.org/warehousing.

Merrill Smith
Editor, World Refugee Survey
U. S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrant

The Child Refugees of Darfur

By Ellie Whinnery

As movie stars and celebrities help focus the world's attention on Sudan and the atrocities that occur there every day, it seems everyone is speaking out. Everyone, that is, except the children. Even though they have witnessed the unspeakable acts committed as the Janjaweed ethnically cleanse the Darfur region through murder, rape and the burning of their homes, children are the last to be heard.

Christian Children's Fund (CCF), which is working in four of the largest Sudanese refugee camps along the Chadian border, has brought children's voices forward in a comprehensive study funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. CCF surveyed 1,580 children in the refugee camps of Iridimi, Touloum, Mille and Kounoungo; conducted 22 focus groups and 19 structured one-on-one interviews. The survey, focus groups and interviews were conducted among children from the ages of five to eighteen. The study has been shared with CCF partner agencies including the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The study shows that life in the refugee camps is tough for children, especially girls. Opportunities for normal childhood activities are almost nil. A seven- to ten-hour workday is the norm for 35 percent of the children. More than half say they do not receive enough food. Educational opportunities exist, but are grossly overcrowded; and children still have nightmares about what happened to them and their families in Darfur.

"Despite all the challenges that these children face, they are incredibly resilient," said Sweta Shah, Child Protection Program Coordinator for CCF. Shah, who has worked for CCF in Chad since September 2005, led the survey. "They may still have nightmares about what they experienced in Darfur or hide in their tents when planes fly over their camps, but they continue to have hope and take initiatives in their community. They just inspire me.

"The greatest need is for the humanitarian community to provide more activities for children and youth, because their specific needs are often not covered by the general services provided to the refugee population. In particular, there is a need for more non-formal education opportunities, secondary schools and income-generating activities," Shah added.

Specifics of the Study

WORK

The majority of children in the camps say they work. While most do not say that they work all day, 35 percent report working seven hours or more each day. Most work at home, helping their parents with domestic chores or collecting firewood. Some perform a combination of domestic chores, farming and firewood collection. (Seventy-one percent report having been injured while working, although the circumstances and severity of the injuries are unknown.) However, despite their work, a very high proportion of children participate in some formal and/or non-formal educational activities.

EDUCATION

The survey reveals very high rates of school attendance. The

majority is attending school for the first time, reflecting the lack of educational opportunities in Sudan. In fact, many children attend both formal and Koranic schools. Most likely attend Madrasas in the afternoon after formal school classes are done.

Although most children attend school, in reality, some children are more likely to be absent half or more days of school. Specifically, girls who were observed to be pregnant are significantly more likely to miss more days of school. Furthermore, indications are that primary school class sizes are very large (100 to 150 students) – putting into question the quality of education received.

HEALTH

Children generally have good access to healthcare. Respondents reported using both modern and traditional medicine. Children in Mille camp are the least likely to attend a clinic for treatment: 30 percent of these children said that they did not go to clinics because they believed the fees were unaffordable (even though the clinics are actually free).

NUTRITION

The majority of children in all camps believe they are not receiving enough food. This may not necessarily reflect the quantities food distributed to families, but may instead reflect inequitable food within families.

GIRLS

The survey reveals that girls are marrying very young, which is not uncommon in this part of Africa. While pregnancy was too sensitive a topic to discuss directly in the girls' focus groups, our interviewers observed that nine percent of the girls interviewed were visibly pregnant, including

four percent of the girls under fourteen. The survey also illustrates that pregnant girls, in particular, are more likely to miss days of school. Married girls and disabled children are also more likely to miss school days.

Quantitative data showed that 42 percent of observed pregnancies were of unwed girls. Health workers also indicated that there were cases of both boys and girls at the camp clinics with sexually transmitted diseases.

Through the focus groups, CCF also found that girls are exposed to sexual violence. This is particularly associated with certain work activities, such as firewood collection outside of the camps.

"As CCF and other humanitarian agencies continue their work in protecting children, this survey will hopefully shed light on some of the specific risks and challenges that refugee children face," said CCF Regional Child Protection Specialist Martin Hayes. "Understanding the depth and nuances of children's experiences will allow for more informed, culturally appropriate programmatic interventions that best protect children and promote their overall well-being."

Next Steps

In response to the survey, CCF is providing and or is planning to provide a variety of services for children, including:

✎ Non-formal education activities for children who want to continue their education after completing the eighth grade. (Currently, there is no secondary schooling for children in the camps. Available literacy and language classes target adults, not children or



Who is particularly vulnerable?

Girls of all ages. This includes married, pregnant and adolescent mothers.

Youth, especially those who are the oldest in their families, as they are often assigned family chores that keep them from attending school. Idle youth also being recruited into armed forces.

Disabled children. About 15 percent of children have a disability of some type, including paralyzation or walking difficulties, sight impairment, hearing impairment, physical deformities, intellectual impairments, and other conditions considered outside the norm. This includes children who are emotionally disturbed because of the atrocities they have seen or experienced.

Separated and unaccompanied children, including those now cared for by people of their own tribe or ethnic group. These children are the most vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse and are the least likely to have access to camp services.

To download a copy of the report, visit the Relief Professionals section of the CCF website.

www.christianchildrensfund.org

youth.) CCF plans to initiate English and French language classes for youth this summer.

☛ Non-formal educational activities for child mothers and married girls with household responsibilities that keep them from attending school.

CCF has already initiated non-formal education classes for 400 adolescent mothers. The classes include literacy, numeracy and life skills training.

☛ Mobile libraries, beginning this summer, that will

go to children's tents weekly so that children no longer in school will not forget how to read.

☛ Income-generating activities so that children who must work can engage in non-exploitative activities in the camps, earn money and still go to school. These activities already reach 400 adolescents in the Mille and Kounoungou camps.

☛ Based on child protection training CCF has already conducted for parents, teachers, and school officials, CCF will launch a second phase to raise community awareness through radio programs and street theater. CCF will work in collaboration with an FM radio station that broadcasts all throughout Eastern Chad and a Chadian Theater Troupe. These programs will focus on child protection issues such as needs of disabled children, children who are separated from their biological parents, and issues confronting girls promised in early marriage.

Ellie Whinnery is Global Communications Manager for CCF. Questions and comments should be sent to elwhinnery@ccfusa.org. Photo: courtesy of Davidson Jonah/CCF.



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refugee voices

Edited and compiled by Veronika Martin, InterAction

International humanitarian organizations are increasingly aware that protection of displaced persons, whether refugees or internally displaced (IDPs), is a difficult and complicated task. Even in the controlled setting of a camp that international organizations oversee, protection problems continue to occur. The following interviews with four former refugees and IDPs from Africa, Asia, and the Balkans, allow us to listen to their experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of international organizations working to protect them. Each interview concludes with advice to organizations responsible for assistance and protection.

Mirsad Miki Jacevic

Refugee from Bosnia and Hercegovina

The siege of my hometown of Sarajevo became a centerpiece of the Bosnian war in the early 1990s. My family lived all over the city, so I became an internally displaced person (IDP) for about six months, moving from a place to place since my apartment was right on the military frontline. After about a year, I became a refugee moving through seven European countries, until I finally received refugee status in Austria in 1994. I came to the U.S. in 1997 and was granted political asylum; in 2006 I am still awaiting permanent residency.

In terms of protection during my displacement, I would give international community mixed marks. They were not able to provide actual military protection/security for many victims of ethnic cleansing. I blame that primarily on impossibly inefficient mandates for the U.N. Protection Forces (UNPROFOR). Their mission was primarily a humanitarian one, focusing on protection of civilian population. But on the ground they mostly just observed the carnage. The wording of U.N. Security Council resolutions concerning UNPROFOR's protection mandate was vague and, most importantly, simply not enforceable on the ground. Additionally, blue helmets (U.N. peacekeepers) on the ground were very reluctant to engage directly with the "warring parties," ignoring the fact that the city was under siege and the VAST majority of victims were civilians, primarily women and children. Therefore, my major recommendation would be to ensure that the U.N., NATO, African Union or whoever is on the ground has a clear and direct protection mandate/mission that is enforceable, measurable, and accountable, and puts top priority on protecting civilians. Too many people continue to perish due to the proverbial "neutrality and impartiality" of international forces. International nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations cannot function in a vacuum, and the physical safety and security of fleeing civilians should be a top priority.

At the same time, I must recognize the valuable services relief agencies provided to the population under siege and displacement, in particular those fleeing ethnic cleansing and who later becoming refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and many other agencies (including a large number of InterAction members) provided shelter, food, clothes, and other basic necessities in quite an efficient manner. By and large, these agencies and their staff in Sarajevo, across Bosnia, and in neighboring countries were committed and professional.

However, I observed one important component missing in their qualifications and training: most of them were not able to handle the traumatic impact that displacement had on IDPs and refugees. Across the board - from those agencies providing immediate relief during the actual displacement to those providing ongoing services for refugee camps in Austria - I felt that psychosocial support was not as efficient as it should have been. We know that the shock and trauma of displacement have multiple effects, but the one that I have felt the most has been the sense of losing dignity and humanity. I have felt that the agencies that have assisted me over the last 14 years have not addressed that issue in a way that can help with resettlement or eventual return. We were lucky that the Austrian government was very generous to Bosnian refugees and organized the camps in a most efficient manner. Therefore, physical, social and sexual abuse only happened within camps (i.e. "refugee on refugee"). However, what was missing were organized ways to assist the population that fled from genocide and war cope psychologically with displacement. There were a few offers of individual, Freudian therapy, but they were mostly ignored since they focused on treating "patients" individually even though they suffered from a "societal" traumatic experience. In short, my recommendation would be that international organizations strengthen their capacity to deal with psychosocial needs of displaced populations.

on protection

Naw Musi

Karen Refugee from Burma

My name is Naw Musi and I am a Karen refugee from Burma. In 1984 my village was attacked and burned by the Burmese army. I fled with my family to Thailand when I was seven years old and lived in a refugee camp for 14 years. After that I left the camp to live illegally in Thailand so that I could further my education by working and studying with NGOs until 2002, when I came to the U.S. to study.

Security in the Refugee Camp

In the refugee camp I was always afraid. Our camp was only a few miles from the border (of Burma) so we feared the Burmese would come and burn down the camp. The Burmese army threatened us, saying that if we did not go back to Burma they would come and attack us. In order to protect ourselves our family dug holes to hide our belongings from shelling and fire.

Unfortunately, our fears came true. We were attacked twice. Our camp was burned in 1997 and again in 1998. The second time was worse. First we were shelled and then hundreds of (Burmese) soldiers came in and shot at us and set our houses on fire. Five people died, including a pregnant woman and two of my younger classmates. Many more were injured and over half of the 10,000 people in the camp were left homeless.

We thought the Thai soldiers or the UNHCR would protect us. But UNHCR was far away in Bangkok. The Thai soldiers pretended to protect us, but the night the camp was burned down they left before the attack even started. After our camp was burned down, the Thai soldiers came with the Thai farmers who owned the land and measured our plots to make them smaller than before - about 8 feet by 10 or 12 feet. We had to pay 50 Baht (\$2.00) rent per month for the smaller plot. Making the plots smaller meant they collected more money from us than before the attack. Not only were they making money off of us, we also had no way to earn money legally without risking arrest by leaving the camp.

After the second burning we were not allowed to build our houses again and had to sleep in the field with no shelter for more than three months. Can you imagine sleeping there in the open with everyone looking at you? It was not safe and we also faced health risks. The medical NGO left after the fire. My stepmother gave birth to her son in the field a day after the camp was burned.

There were other problems in the camps. There was some domestic violence, but until I learned about human rights I did not know these rights were being violated. Once I learned about this, I was more aware of my environment and realized domestic violence was happening. It was not systematic, but it happened. It is hard to speak out about our own culture. Our tendency is to make big problems small and small problems invisible, so people think everything is normal.

After we were homeless in the field we wrote letters and asked UNHCR to protect us. Later they got permission to do more in the camps.

Even now the refugees continue to live in fear. I talked to my uncle in the camp a few days ago and he said they got news the Burmese military is setting up troops and long range guns on the Burmese side of the border, not far from the camps.

The situation for internally displaced people in eastern Burma is very bad now. People are fleeing army attacks and we know UNHCR has a big role to play to help protect them but we don't hear UNHCR condemn Burma. Only the NGOs do that. I think UNHCR is supposed to be neutral; but what kind of neutrality is it if you stand by while civilians are dying?

When I lived in the camp, I was not aware of any of the international laws on protection. We did not know what human rights were. When you don't know what they are then you don't know how to demand them.

Life Outside the Refugee Camp

We also feel danger outside the camp. If you go out of the camp to find vegetables you risk of arrest or abuse by Thai soldiers. It is even more dangerous if you decide to leave the camp all together.

To apply for refugee status we had to go all the way to Bangkok illegally. By definition, we were refugees because we were persecuted and running for our lives. But since Thai law did not recognize us as such, we were not qualified as refugees and UNHCR could not protect us. Many of us went to Bangkok, risking arrest or worse to get refugee status. If you were caught at the Thai checkpoint you would get sent to prison. If you were a woman you might be sexually abused. Or worse, you could be deported back to Burma.

I know some people who hired smugglers to get them to jobs. Sometimes the smugglers would take them half way and leave them. My friends had to borrow 7000 Baht (\$200) to get smuggled to Bangkok. Some got taken to places where they had to work day and night. Others were tricked and had to work in the brothels to pay off the debt. They were literally sold to the employer until they paid back the debt.

I remember after all the trouble and risk to get to Bangkok, I went to UNHCR for an interview to become a real refugee and they never responded.

Advice for International Organizations

I see the NGOs doing their job according to their mandate but what I don't understand is UNHCR. They don't fulfill their duty. Aren't they supposed to protect the refugees who are being abused by their governments? Isn't that what the UNHCR stands for? At a minimum they could condemn Burma or qualify these people for refugee status so they can be protected. The recent attacks on the Karen people in Eastern Burma is another example of the failure of the international community to meet their mandates of maintaining peace and protecting civilians.

In the end, I feel that if change is going to happen for us it will have to happen within ourselves. We cannot only depend on the international organizations. The international community has to

work together with the local people if they really want to work for the people rather than come up with their own agenda and pretend as if they are expert on how to protect the people. For example, if UNHCR wants to protect the people in the camp, they should not only take advice from the Thai government, but also from the local refugees. This way they will hear both sides of the story before they go ahead with their planning and procedures.

M. Sengiyumva Refugee from Burundi

I am M. Sengiyumva, a native and citizen of Burundi. My mother was a Twa (Batwa/Matwa). The Twa are a pygmy group who are the original inhabitants of Burundi. My father was a Hutu. They had different religions: my mother was Christian and my father was Muslim.

I fled my village because the village rejected my mother's ethnicity. Burundian soldiers later massacred the people in my aunt's village where I stayed. We were spared because the soldiers had not yet been ordered to kill Twas. We fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo where we barely made a living. A few years later in 1995, rebels from Tanzania destroyed our village. My mother was shot while trying to escape. While trying to get to Tanzania, a group of us were kidnapped by Congolese soldiers who tortured us and killed some of us. Left for dead, we got out and walked towards Tanzania. Tanzanian soldiers eventually picked us up. They took all our money and sent us to Mtabila 2 a UNHCR camp in Kasulu, Kigoma, Tanzania. I was there for five years from 1997 to 2002.

Life in the Refugee Camp

Life in the refugee camp was very harsh. We were confined to the camp, food was scarce and the crime rate very high. I never felt safe. Most of the camps claim to separate different groups or tribes, but that is not true. My camp was mixed (Hutus, Tutsis, Twas, and Congolese) and this often caused much fighting and abuse. When I arrived I was assigned to share a plot with three mates, since I was a 14 year-old "unaccompanied minor". The "head of household" was 19 and a former combatant. Just a few weeks later, my roommate was stabbed to death in a race-hate crime. When we reported the death to the camp authority, he said his men would investigate when we started paying taxes to the government.

We did not feel safe with each other in that house. UNHCR put us together without thinking about ethnic tensions. We were mixed race and did not know who our enemy was. I tried to avoid being together or sleeping in the house with them. We argued about the war between the Hutus and Tutsis and who was better.

I also had problems because I was Twa. One night I was attacked while walking back to my hut. I knew who was involved and tried to report them, but no action was taken. So I had to fend for myself. What made it worse was that at night rebel groups entered the camp to recruit and to train those who joined them. Warlords kidnapped young boys aged nine to 16. I believe the authorities knew, but they don't care about you: they get money to protect you but they couldn't care less. To avoid all these negative nighttime activities I kept myself busy with school programs in the camp.

Most camps claim to protect the refugees. To some extent this is true, but most of the time they are careless about refugees.

Camp authorities are local people and they never like refugees, so protection is very bad. Rebels and warlords would enter the camp, recruit anyone they wanted and sexually violate women and young girls. Rape was an everyday occurrence both by rebels and by men in the camp. If there is a mixed marriage, men might gang up on the wife and rape her. These crimes mostly go unsolved or unreported because people fear for their lives. I know a few refugees who reported abuses and then disappeared. Rumors went around that they were tortured and burned to death.

There were also problems in the camp about women and polygamy. Women threw hot oil, hot water, beat or hurt women; women-on-women and husbands-on-women. We would see them walking around the camp. In serious or high profile cases like murder or rape with witnesses, the authorities would investigate, question people, and pretend they have force; then the investigation would go cold. Nothing happened. The bad people were free again. Law enforcement was weak.

Different NGOs started to educate mostly women how to deal with abuse and taught refugees to speak up. However, UNHCR staff were Tanzanian and very rude. They said we were a burden to society. Tanzanians working for UNHCR are doing business so they sell tarps, food, and clothes that people donate for the camps. When the donors visit they pretend to give us blankets and cooking oil.

We had to be creative to make money to survive - farming, cooking items for sale, or running small businesses. However, if we were caught outside the camp people mistreated us. Local people robbed my friend and I outside the camp. If we had tried to defend ourselves they would have hurt us so we cooperated.

Advice to International Organizations

Outside actors should try to be present or use people not from the country where the refugees are located. Outsiders need to know that donated things sent to refugees don't actually reach the refugees, or if they do, they get sold to the refugees instead of being given to them. Refugee protection needs to be done by different people and not local enforcement people, who mostly don't care about refugees. UNHCR and NGOs also need to find out the real ethnic composition in the camps. Separating camps by ethnicity would reduce crime. Finally, for unaccompanied minors, don't make a 19 year-old the head of household. Choose someone mature who can teach values. Someone worthy of being in charge.

Ebenezer Mainlehwon Vonhm Benda Internally Displaced in Liberia and a Refugee in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana, and Ivory Coast

I was an internally displaced person in Liberia for a total of two years between 1990 and 1994. In between, I was a refugee in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana and Ivory Coast. In 1995, I settled in the Ivory Coast. In 1996, I came to the U.S. to study. From 2005-2006, I returned to Liberia as a professional for an international organization where I continued to observe the interactions between international aid organizations and IDPs in Monrovia and the surrounding areas. I also visited refugee friends in Ghana and Ivory Coast.

Life as an IDP

As an internally displaced person, I spent time in community centers, school buildings, churches, and community guest houses. They only provided sleeping places, no food or medical services. They were usually close to the battlefield, thus making it difficult to receive NGO or U.N. assistance. If the fighting was more than 75 miles away, NGOs would start to show up.

Life as a Refugee

In most of the countries where I sought refuge, I registered with the UNHCR in order to receive shelter, food, medical care, and education. If I did not register I could not receive benefits. But being registered with UNHCR did not mean things were easy. These camps had constant food and medical shortages. If monthly supplies were late or not enough to sustain a family, many people turned to unlawful activities to survive. Sometimes they stole and got in trouble. When there were no food shortages we stayed out of trouble more.

As a refugee abroad, the language barrier caused problems and made it easy for locals to identify me as a refugee. Most were not happy with the refugees. They accused us of taking their jobs, working without paying taxes, and for increased crime rates. When I was a refugee in Guinea I was put in jail while I was outside of the camp. Local people accused my friend and me of committing a crime. Luckily the security forces intervened and took us to jail quickly or the crowd could have beaten us. One of our refugee leaders came and confirmed that we were not criminals and they released us.

There were many problems in the camps. Some people couldn't stand the hardship, so many young men and women quickly went back to Liberia for rebel training. In the camp, all you think about is surviving and staying well. You can't earn money to buy sunglasses or jeans. People were usually persuaded to return to fighting by friends who joined the rebels and came to the camps with money, new clothes, and shoes.

Corruption, Sexual Exploitation, and Misconduct by the U.N. and NGOs

One of the most common protection problems was that UNHCR and WFP international employees sold food, medicines, and supplies to refugees or community members, or sometimes used these benefits to lure females to make love to them. Girls would love UNHCR, World Food Program or aid employees (both local and international) because they needed food. Family members encouraged their daughters or sisters to love to these guys, even though the girls did not want to. A relief worker would give his girlfriend extra ration tickets in exchange for a continued love relationship.

Usually this sort of thing was not a big deal. Everyone in the camps including the refugees and employees (including internationals) knew aid workers were exchanging food for sex or selling supplies meant for the refugees - even though they pretended they didn't know. If an atrocity was committed against a refugee by a native community member, then it was a public problem. Complaints would be made to the camp manager who would meet with the community leaders. However, when it comes to sex and corruption in the camp, it is secretive - don't ask and don't tell.

Generally nobody complains. A girl might tell her family, but (as far as I know) there is no special place to report it, not in the camps or IDP areas. Even if you want to tell, you can't get to the heads of these organizations. They have security all around them. If you tell, even your own friend will chastise you. If there was a secret place to expose it, I think people would do it. I believe that if refugees were encouraged to make complaints, it would help eliminate the fear that if you report these employees you might put your entire family at risk of not receiving food supplies.

The international NGOs had funding for programs to raise awareness about AIDS, sexual abuse, etc. They had to show donors what their programs accomplished, but how much did they actually change behavior? The campaigns were not consistent; they didn't use different media or really push messages through local community events. They came every six months and said something. They should involve well-known people, women's groups, and people with influence. Somebody from the head office in the U.S. goes to these villages with their fancy laptop and pulls out a wonderful PowerPoint presentation. It looks good, but it isn't really effective. We hear it but what does it mean to me? Those people leave from there without being connected to the message.

I just returned from Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Liberia. Most of the camps I visited in all these countries still have these conditions, especially in Liberia. I spent over seven months seeing Liberian females in IDP camps loving peacekeepers and aid workers only because they wanted some food and money to keep their families alive. An international staff person makes a minimum of U.S. \$2,500. If you love to be a humanitarian worker and get U.S. \$100 a month you can feed a family of four for one month.

This January I was living near a peacekeeping barracks. I saw women coming and going from the barracks all day. All they had to do is go with peacekeepers to a mischief bar and hotel just outside the barracks' fence. Girls in Liberia after age 12 don't go to school; they appeal to men with money.

Advice for International and National Actors

There should be a civil society group in every community to document abuses and help the women: an impartial source not affiliated with the U.N. or NGOs. They need to be low-profile and keep the identity anonymous. Involve Liberian women's organizations and respected community people - someone who is with these people everyday and speaks the local English and local languages. I can't trust any U.N., international organization, or Government ministry person to do this work.

It's true international organizations have a big code of conduct on sexual exploitation. But you just sign it. It's not enforced. Are people at the top really ready to enforce it when they themselves are loving local women or men? Most of the people on top don't have the guts to stand before the local staff and enforce the code. Field supervisors know what is going on, but back in the headquarters everyone acts like it is not happening. The U.S. headquarters need to be more involved and have people on the ground who know the situation. As for the people who misbehave, the short response should be, "You are fired." It must come from the top and they must publicly make clear why they are fired.