

OUR VISION

We envision a world in which refugee and internally displaced women, children and youth...

- are safe, healthy and self-reliant;
- have their human rights respected and protected;
- are empowered to contribute to their own solutions.

OUR MISSION

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

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WOMEN'S  
REFUGEE  
COMMISSION

2014  
Front cover photo © WRC/Lauren Heller

The Women's Refugee Commission is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are deductible to the full extent allowable under IRS regulations.

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS *continued*

PROMOTING INCLUSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN HUMANITARIAN PRACTICE

Displaced persons with disabilities are at the center of our work, and we seek to facilitate their participation and voice in all our activities.

In Lebanon, we met Dima, a 17-year-old refugee from Syria. At home, she had studied Braille. Now she regularly attends a community center for English classes. "[The center] is nice and very good," she says. "They have studies here and it is fun. I have a goal. I want to learn and teach others like me. I like to prove myself to others."

- *Disabilities among Refugees and Conflict-affected Populations* was the first global research report – with accompanying resource kit for humanitarian workers – to address the critical needs of this nearly invisible population. Since then, our technical support to UNHCR and its partners in eight countries, has promoted change in policy at the UN refugee agency headquarters level and change in practice at field levels as documented in the publication *Disability Inclusion: Translating Policy into Practice in Humanitarian Action*.

FIGHTING FOR WOMEN AND CHILD MIGRANTS' RIGHTS AND AN END TO ARBITRARY DETENTION



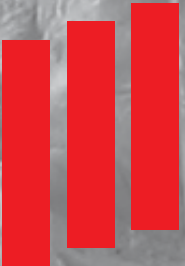
Kevin was threatened by gangs in his home country of Guatemala. Two of his close friends were murdered after similar threats. Kevin fled to the United States, where he had family who he hoped could protect him. He didn't tell the border patrol about what had happened to him. "You can't talk to them," he said. "They are just trying to throw you back again." But after a week in a Health and Human Services detention shelter, he said he watched a presentation about his legal rights and later met a lawyer. "I felt comfortable talking to them," he said. "I changed my mind and decided to tell the truth." With help from a pro-bono attorney, Kevin was able to win his asylum case to stay in the United States and live with his family.

- We advocate for basic civil and due process protections for migrants seeking protection. We advocate for standards in accordance with international human rights law, protections to keep families together and screening of vulnerable migrants so that they have access to protection such as asylum.
- Our advocacy has resulted in improved conditions within detention facilities and expanded the use of legal orientation programs and alternatives to detention. We advocated for the Women's Medical Standard and ensured that the Prison Rape Elimination Act National Standards are applied to protect women and children in immigration detention from sexual assault and violence.
- Our reports, research and advocacy expertise inform policy and legislation and are frequently cited by Congress, the Administration, NGO partners and the media.

Read more about these and other important achievements at: [womensrefugeecommission.org](http://womensrefugeecommission.org)



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OUR WORK AT A GLANCE



# WHY IT MATTERS

Our on-the-ground research and advocacy lead to life-changing improvements for these vulnerable yet resilient populations.

Our work is critical because:

... 80 percent of the world's 51 million people displaced by conflict are women, children and youth. We are dedicated to improving their lives;

...most refugees living in camps and urban areas are displaced for an average of almost 20 years;

... too many displaced persons lack access to the most basic services, including education, economic opportunities and health care. This heightens the risk of physical abuse, exploitation and disease. For example:

- Reproductive health problems are a leading cause of death and illness among displaced women and girls of reproductive age.
- Women and youth resort to dangerous income-generating activities that place them at risk because they lack access to education and work programs that could help them become self-reliant and keep them safe from harm.
- Persons with disabilities are hidden in shelters, missed in needs assessments and not consulted in the design of programs, increasing their risk of violence, abuse and exploitation in displacement contexts.
- Migrants who come to the U.S. are often held in inhumane conditions, with restricted access to justice and protection.
- Adolescent girls miss out on programs designed for women and children, placing them at heightened risk and limiting their potential.

## HOW WE CHANGE LIVES

Through field and desk research, we identify problems, develop solutions and advocate for changes in policies and programs, resulting in lasting change for displaced people.

We provide technical assistance to United Nations agencies and NGOs to help them assess, evaluate and improve their programs. We develop and promote new tools and guidance through online and field-based trainings to humanitarian practitioners around the world.

We conduct advocacy at the UN and with governments for policies, funding and practices to better protect and serve displaced populations. Through our website, social media, media and events we reach and engage a broad consistency of activists and influential people, who amplify our messages and join our calls to action.

We work in the following areas:

### Economic Empowerment

Design tools and trainings to build safe, dignified economic opportunities for displaced women and young people.

### Sexual & Reproductive Health

Save lives through improving access to critical sexual and reproductive health services.

### Safe Access to Fuel and Energy

Promote alternative fuel sources and fuel-efficient cookstoves as ways to reduce risks for women and girls and protect the environment.

### Disability Inclusion

Identify effective strategies to ensure people with disabilities are included in all programs and services, and have opportunities to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

### Adolescent Girls

Promote tools and approaches that enhance empowerment and address the critical protection needs facing adolescent girls in crises settings.

### Statelessness

Campaign to give women equal rights with men to pass on their nationality to their children and non-national spouses.

### Migrant Rights & Justice

Protect migrants' human rights and their ability to access justice and due process.

### Ending Violence against Women & Girls

Ensure that protection of women and girls from sexual violence, physical abuse and exploitation is built into all humanitarian programs.



# OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We contribute to lasting solutions for displaced women, children and youth around the world. Some of our proudest achievements:

## GIVING WOMEN A CHANCE TO EARN A SAFE, DIGNIFIED LIVING

Mana Ling, a master weaver working for an artisanal bag production company, participated in a shelter and asset restoration project supported by the Women's Refugee Commission after Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. "Food assistance will run dry...how long can we rely on that? We need to send the children back to school and feed them ourselves. We need our jobs back." With her tools and equipment back, along with a safe space to work, Mana Ling and 400 other weavers were able to go back to work two months after the disaster wiped out their homes and place of work.



© WRC/Ann Lee  
Mana Ling (left) got her business back on track with assistance from the WRC.

- Our *Building Livelihoods: A Field Manual for Practitioners in Humanitarian Settings* is the first comprehensive guide to help humanitarian teams design and implement effective work programs.
- Our *Safety Mapping Tool* provides guidance on how to design economic opportunities for women and girls do not put them at greater risk of violence.

## SAVING LIVES WITH SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE

"We feel happy about our ability to support those who have been sexually assaulted. Before, we didn't know about gender-based violence. Now, we can return to our communities, share information and provide care to patients. We can work better than before." *Community health worker on the Thai/Burma border who was trained in a WRC-led project to provide medical attention and post-trauma support to women and girls who have experienced sexual violence.*

- We have developed, with partners, a groundbreaking community-based program to provide medical care for sexual violence survivors in eastern Myanmar (Burma). We have developed a curriculum with UNICEF based on this model for wider application.
- Evidence shows that advocacy led by the WRC over the last decade on the standard of care known as the Minimum Initial Services Package for reproductive health services in emergencies has increased the availability of these lifesaving services at the onset of humanitarian emergencies.

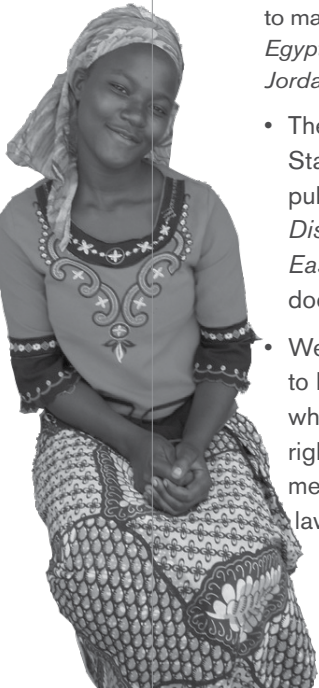
## KEEPING WOMEN AND GIRLS SAFE WHEN COLLECTING FIREWOOD

"Thanks to the Women's Refugee Commission, a project was started in many camps to keep women safe and protect the environment. Families received fuel-efficient stoves. I got a stove and learned how to use it. Now I need to use less cooking fuel. We used to go to collect firewood six days a week....Now, we go only two or three times a week....I now have more time to do my day labor and feed my children." *As told to the Women's Refugee Commission by a displaced Congolese woman.*



© WCR/Erin Patrick  
A refugee woman makes a fuel-efficient stove in DRC.

- In collaboration with 25 UN agencies and NGOs, WRC spearheaded the development of guidelines that addressed – for the first time ever – the need for safe access to appropriate fuel in humanitarian settings.
- Our concerted advocacy led to the development of the UN refugee agency's Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) Strategy, which will enable millions of uprooted people to have regular and reliable access to fuel and energy without threat to their lives or well-being.



## ENSURING THAT ADOLESCENT GIRLS STAY SAFE AND DEVELOP THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO THRIVE AND PROTECT THEMSELVES

"Girls had no hope for the future beyond doing house chores, getting married, taking care of children... but now they are starting to think about their life ahead and plan. They're learning to work together, understand that they could make a team and do better than what they can do alone..." *Male refugee community leader in a group discussion in Tanzania talking about adolescent girls participating in a pilot project supported by the Women's Refugee Commission.*

- In refugee camps in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda we pilot-tested a "safe space" model as a vehicle for delivering services and building adolescent girls' social networks, knowledge and skills that they need to make a safe and healthy transition into adulthood.
- We are now looking at how to address the critical protection needs of adolescent girls in the earliest days of emergencies when their risks are highest. We are pioneering the use of mobile phones in emergency settings to map crisis-affected areas and to identify the locations, ages and specific vulnerabilities of girls. This provides humanitarian workers with timely data and information they can use to safely link girls to emergency aid, services and programs.

## ENDING GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN NATIONALITY LAWS

"If I had known that there would be these problems, I would never have married my husband. Why are my children to blame for a mistake I made? I made a choice to marry someone who doesn't have the same nationality as me. Now my kids can't access education or healthcare, and my husband really suffers from this problem....I didn't think that there would be these problems when I wanted to marry." *Sana, a Jordanian national, is married to an Egyptian man and lives with him and their children in Jordan. Her children are stateless.*

- The Women's Refugee Commission, with the Statelessness Program at Tilburg University, published *Our Motherland, Our Country: Gender Discrimination and Statelessness in the Middle East and North Africa*, the first-of-its-kind report to document gender discrimination in nationality laws.
- We are coordinating the International Campaign to End Gender Discrimination in Nationality Laws, which aims to change laws to allow women the same right to pass their nationality onto their children as men in the countries where these discriminatory laws remain on the books.

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