

Wednesday, 27 September 2006

13h30 – 15h00 Room XXIII

Implementation of the Best Interest Determination Guidelines

Ron Pouwels, Community Development, Gender Equity & Children Service, UNHCR

Adriano Silvestri, Solution and Operations Support Section, UNHCR

Jane Warburton, Child and Youth Protection Development Unit, International Rescue Committee

In May 2006 UNHCR published a provisional release of the UNHCR Guidelines on Formal Determination of the Best Interests of the Child. Over the last months Field Offices has started to implement the Guidelines, often in close co-operation with NGOs and competent national authorities. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the initial feedback received from the Field on the implementation of the guidelines, including the main challenges so far identified.

13h30 – 15h00 Room XXIV

Getting Fuel on the Map: Promoting a coordinated strategy for addressing fuel needs in conflict-affected settings

Erin Patrick, Women's Commission for Refugee Women & Children

The risks to displaced women and girls – including rape, assault, abduction, exploitation and murder – associated with firewood collection have been well known to the humanitarian community for years. Despite this fact, few effective strategies are yet in place to combat the problem. The Women's Commission's Fuel and Firewood Initiative will support the physical integrity and protection from violence of displaced women and girls during fuel collection by ensuring that fuel and related issues are mainstreamed on the humanitarian agenda from the earliest stages of a crisis. This session will outline the findings and recommendations of the Women's Commission's recent report Beyond Firewood, and discuss and solicit feedback on the Initiative's next steps, including pilot projects in Darfur and Chad; creating a "home" for fuel-related initiatives within the UN system; and promoting the development, use and eventual institutionalization by the humanitarian community of a coordinated fuel strategy during all phases of refugee and IDP crises.

18h00 – 19h30 Room XXII

Refugee All Stars

Michel Gaudé, Africa Bureau, UNHCR

A viewing of a documentary film "The Refugee All Stars" about a Sierra Leonean refugee band in Guinea. The documentary won several international film awards, including the Grand Jury Prize for the best documentary American Film Institute (AFI) international Film Festival in November 2005.

Thursday, 28 September 2006

09h00 – 10h00 Room XXIII

Exporting the Australian Model – The case of Afghanistan

Zeena Elton, Edmund Rice Centre;
Kate Gauthier, A Just Australia

Researchers from the Edmund Rice Centre in Australia recently visited Afghanistan to monitor returned asylum seekers in order to examine questions concerning Australia's failure to meet the requirement of effective protection. Researchers found that as many as 9 Afghans including 3 children, seeking asylum in Australia who were returned from the Pacific island of Nauru were killed following their arrival in their home country. Serious questions have emerged concerning Australia's procedures in relation to refoulement which will be the focus for this discussion.

13h30 – 15h00 Room XXIII

Responding to Allegations of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Persons of Concern by Aid Workers

Radha Ivory, International Council of Voluntary Agencies;
Katharina Samara-Wickrama, International Council of Voluntary Agencies;
Natalia Tapies, FilmAid International

Reports of exploitation and abuse in refugee camps in West Africa and Nepal in 2002 and again in Liberia in 2006, demonstrate that NGOs working with persons of concern must anticipate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by members of their staff. This session will explore two initiatives developed by NGOs to improve their capacities to receive and respond to allegations of abuse by aid workers. Through the presentations, attendees will gain valuable insights into successful training and communication techniques for combating SEA of beneficiaries by humanitarian staff.

Katharina Samara-Wickrama will present on the work of the Building Safer Organisations (BSO) project to train NGO staff to conduct and manage investigations into beneficiary SEA complaints. These programmes were rolled-out successfully in 5 regions in the first half of 2006 and will be accompanied shortly by training materials and guidelines on complaint investigation and management.

Natalia Tapies will discuss the Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) project in Kenya. A partnership of 14 NGOs, PSEA works to prevent SEA by aid workers in Kenyan refugee camps by raising beneficiary awareness of SEA and generating interagency protocols on complaint mechanisms. PSEA is widely regarded as a model of interagency cooperation on SEA issues.

13h30 – 15h00 Room XXIV

UNHCR Refugee Status Determination: Progress towards reform?

Tarek Badawi, AMERA-Egypt; Moderator: Christine Bloch, Jesuit Refugee Service;
Michael Kagan, African Middle-East Refugee Assistant;
Amy Slotek, Helsinki Citizens Assembly Refugee Legal Aid Project (Turkey);
Rick Stainsby, Status Determination & Protection Information Section, UNHCR;
Samira Trad, Frontiers Association (Lebanon); Judy Wakahiu, Refugee Consortium of Kenya

In 2005, UNHCR published its first ever standards for fairness and due process in refugee status determination by its own field offices. The standards were welcomed by NGOs as a step forward, but also drew criticism because they stop short of the normal standards of due process promoted by UNHCR for refugee cases adjudicated by State. Examples include: giving applicants reasons for rejection, allowing applicants to see the evidence used in their cases, and providing an independent appeal system. UNHCR officials called the Guidelines a "living document," promising they could be revised in the future and that they would reconsider the policy on access to evidence. A year later, NGOs have complained that Standards are not being implemented consistently, and are calling on UNHCR for more determined steps toward RSD reform.

Friday, 29 September 2006

09h00 – 10h00 Room XXIII

No Refuge: The Crisis of Refugee Militarization in Africa

Iain Hall, Emergency and Security Service, UNHCR

Keith Krause, Small Arms Survey

Mathijs Le Rutte, Division of International Protection Services, UNHCR

Robert Muggah, Editor of *No Refuge*, Small Arms Survey

Co-published by the Small Arms Survey and the Bonn International Center for Conversion, *No Refuge* provides compelling evidence of the specific relationships between arms flows and the militarization of refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) camps throughout the African continent. The volume reflects on the extent to which refugees and IDPs are voluntarily and involuntarily drawn into cross-border and internal conflicts in Guinea, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda and the implications for protection and asylum.

09h00 – 10h00 Room XXIV

Palestinian Vulnerability to Forced Displacement

Bill Frelick, Human Rights Watch;

Karine Mac Allister, Badil Resource Center;

Nathalie Mivelaz, Center on Housing Rights and Eviction (COHRE)

Palestinians have faced numerous waves of displacement since at least since 1948. Today, many Palestinians, both refugees and non-refugees, are still vulnerable to displacement. This meeting aims to discuss the current situation of Palestinians and the appropriate response to their ongoing displacement.

Human Rights Watch will present its recent report on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Iraq, "Nowhere to Flee: The Perilous Situation of Palestinians in Iraq" while Badil Resource Center will present its joint report with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre on the situation of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories, "Displaced by the Wall, Forced Displacement as a Result of the West Bank Wall and its Associated Regime". The Center on Housing Rights and Eviction will discuss the relevant legal instruments to respond to forced displacement.