

# REFUGEES

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## WOMEN: Seeking A Better Deal

## The Lost Girls of Sudan





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UNHCR/R. CHALASANI/CS+TZA+1996

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# REFUGEES

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Efforts to give refugee women a better deal have made progress. But a lot more needs to be done.

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**4** In the last few years, the lot of refugee women has improved with new international and national laws, humanitarian guidelines and programs tackling everything from illiteracy to sexual violence. But much more needs to be done to help women like these refugees from Sierra Leone.



UNHCR/W. STONE/KEN+2002

**8** It was a terrible story of biblical proportions—thousands of youngsters wandering for years in the African bush. Until now the world has only heard one part of the story.



© S. SALGADO

**14** This photo essay underscores not only the brutality of refugee life, but the resilience of its women victims.

# Why the difference?

**T**he odyssey was a stirring tale of survival. Thousands of young people, some as young as seven or eight, forced from their homes by a vicious civil war, wandering for years, sometimes literally without clothing, surviving on roots and leaves. The majority lost their parents. Some were

killed by lions, crocodiles and bandits during their travels.

They eventually arrived at a refugee camp in northern Kenya where they sat in the swirling dust of the African plains for several more years.

Their story eventually seeped into the wider world. The United States agreed to resettle several thousand of these young people.

They were interviewed extensively by the media on their biblical wanderings and their collision with a strange new world which included cars, washing machines and television for the first time in their lives.

Everyone featured was a boy. Everyone resettled was a boy. The 'Lost Boys of Sudan' became celebrities.

The missing factor in this story was that many of the youngsters who survived were girls.

In exile, the boys managed to maintain their personal identities. It was thus perhaps easier to identify with them and help them.

The girls were often absorbed into foster homes, becoming domestic servants cooking, cleaning, chopping wood and on occasion entering into 'arranged' marriages and fetching a dowry for their adoptive parents. Their individual identities melded into the daily routine of the camp and they were overlooked.

The story of the lost boys and girls of Sudan neatly underlines the often differing problems and fortunes of refugee women and refugee men highlighted in this issue of the magazine.

It is undoubtedly true that progress has been made in the last two decades to tackle women's problems including adoption of international laws, national legislation, innovative programs and a greater awareness on the part of both humanitarian workers and refugees themselves.

It is equally clear more needs to be done—a renewed commitment by humanitarian agencies, programs re-examined and perhaps reshaped, new approaches tried.

One of the most fundamental problems, paradoxically, is the widespread attitude of looking at women merely as 'hapless' refugees and concentrating on their vulnerability to the detriment of developing their strengths.

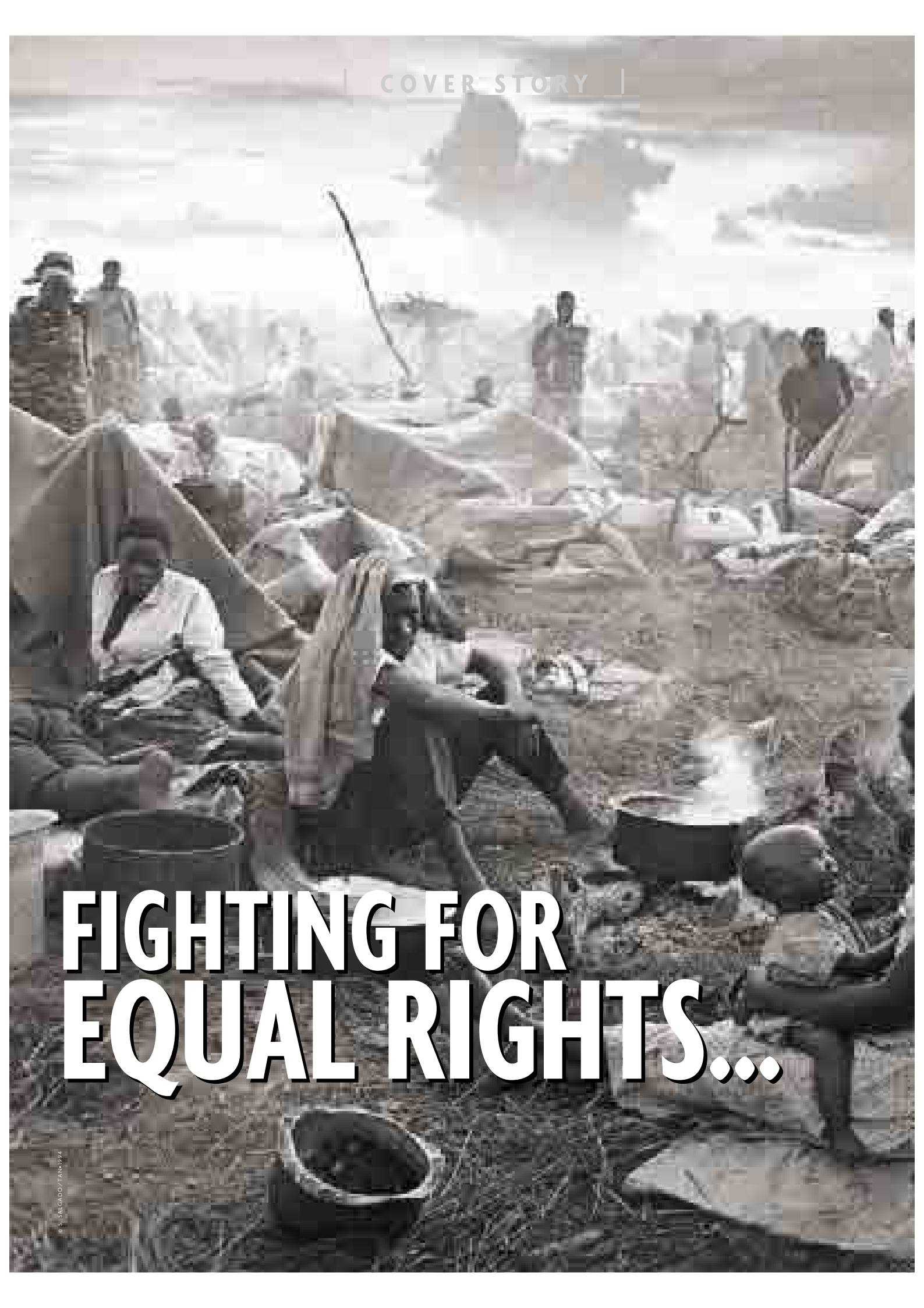
Like the Sudanese girls, Vaira Vike-Freiberga fled a country at war and trekked through several countries for a number of years. Through her own strength, resourcefulness and a little luck her life changed dramatically. Today, she is the President of Latvia and as REFUGEES reports elsewhere in the magazine is determined to continue to fight for the displaced: "I don't know whether we can do it in the next five years or 50 or 100, but I do know we have no choice. We must act."

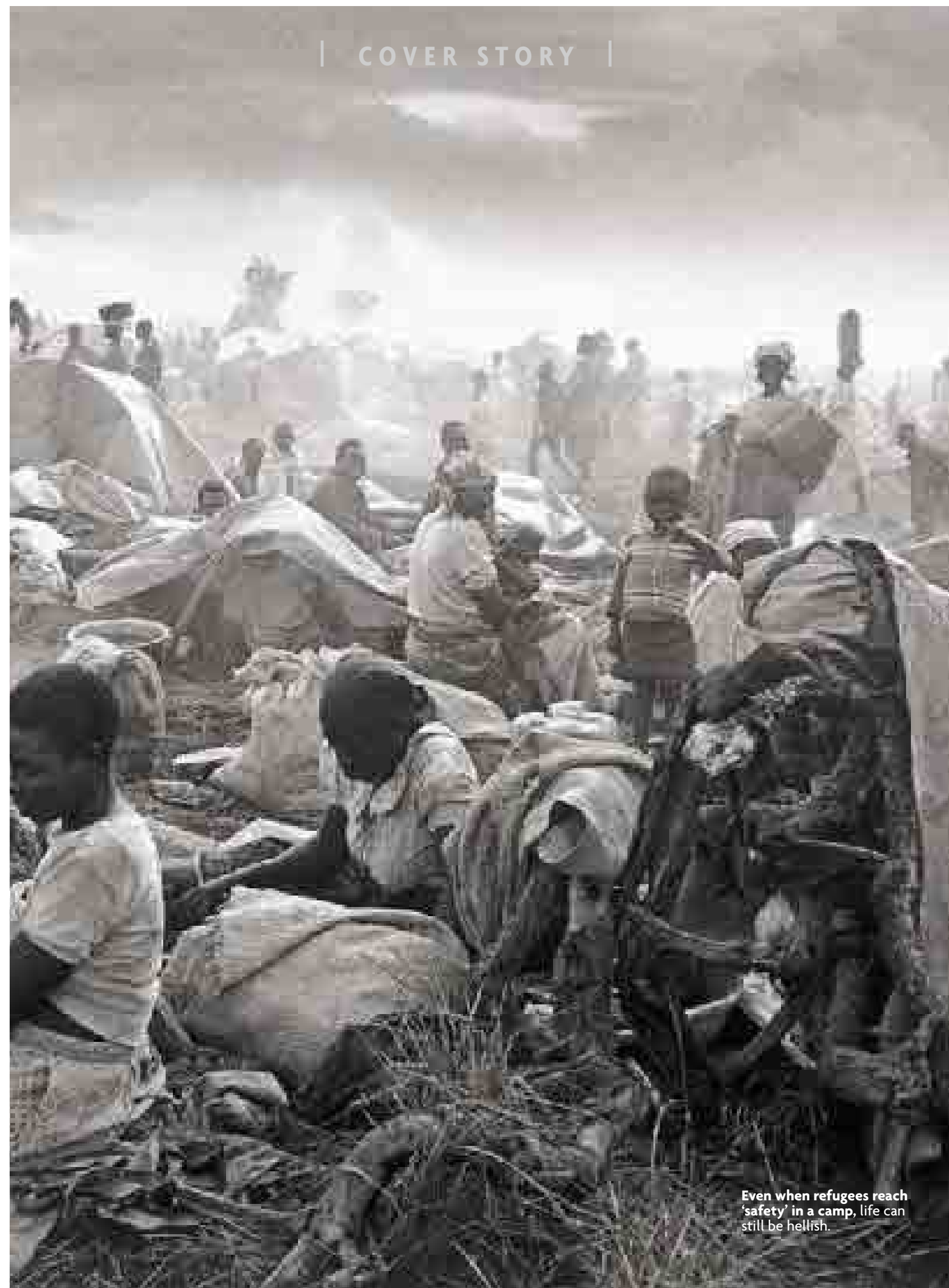


UNHCR/W. STONE/CS&KEN/2002

The 'forgotten' Lost Girls of Sudan in a Kenyan refugee camp.

# FIGHTING FOR EQUAL RIGHTS...





Even when refugees reach 'safety' in a camp, life can still be hellish.

*Do refugee women get a fair deal? There's been progress, but there's still a long way to go*

It was another tragic flood of refugees, like so many which have scarred the African continent in the last few decades—tens of thousands of terrified Angolans fleeing war in their homeland, trudging across a battered and savage landscape in search of safety. Neighboring Zaire, a land of potentially fabulous wealth also brought to its knees by the despotic rule of the late President Mobutu Sese Seko, nevertheless responded kindly, as so many African nations do, to the newly arrived refugees.

Food was distributed and large plots of land earmarked for the Angolans. The criteria for assistance in the 1980s was simple: It was allocated to all “able-bodied male heads of household.”

Field officer Christine Mougne was appalled. “Aren’t there any refugee women here?” she recalls asking her colleagues. “It hadn’t entered anybody’s mind that 30 percent of the refugees were women.”

“We knocked some heads together,” Mougne said. “It took time, but eventually the women were also given help.”

Another crisis, another decade, but the mindset remained the same. As armies of Kurds fled the mayhem of Iraq in the wake



UNHCR/R. LEMOYNE/CS+MKD+1999

**Flight is often a terrifying ordeal. Kosovar women reach safety in 1999.**

of the Gulf War in 1991, UNHCR emergency officer John Telford remembered that after a period of utter chaos, an orderly food distribution system was put into place for the displaced civilians.

Unfortunately, all the appointed food marshals were local men and little aid reached any women.

“Had that group (of women) stood out in some way—visually or physically, because of their ethnic background, or a religious difference, or whatever—we would have made sure they got food,” he said in

an interview shortly after the operation. “But because they were women, it didn’t even occur to us. It didn’t even occur to me, I have to admit—to my shame.”

The story was similar for women staff entering the humanitarian field. Male personnel far outnumbered women, who were often ‘invisible’ at the higher levels of aid organizations. One new recruit interested in gender issues was told by a female colleague, “You have to accept that entering the world of social services (for women) you will become a pariah within UNHCR.”

In any civilian exodus, women and children normally make up an estimated 75 percent of a refugee population. But despite that telling statistic, prevailing attitudes should, perhaps, not have come as a particular shock. After all, the 1951 Geneva Convention—the Magna Carta of international refugee law—was crafted by an all-male panel and defined a refugee as someone with a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion. The founding fathers did not deliberately omit

## THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE 1951 GENEVA CONVENTION DID NOT DELIBERATELY OMIT PERSECUTION BASED ON GENDER— IT WAS NOT EVEN CONSIDERED.

persecution based on gender—it was not even considered.

**VOICES:** “Women are left out of everything. We do not participate in planning or designing programs which are aimed at us. We are second-class citizens when it comes to food, water and shelter distributions. We remain the world’s invisible refugees.”

In later decades the fight to give women a better deal, both in the wider world and on the humanitarian scene, progressed fit-

fully in many parts of the world.

The situation began to change for refugee women in the late 1980s and accelerated through the last decade of the 20th century, but many questions remain relevant today: How much real advancement has been made? How quickly is progress being achieved? Is this good enough? What more needs to be done?

To be sure, there have been breakthroughs and achievements in many areas. Multiple policy statements and gender guidelines were adopted by the U.N.

refugee agency and other organizations.

As long ago as 1985 UNHCR’s Executive Committee endorsed its first Conclusion on Refugee Women and International Protection and three years later organized its first comprehensive Consultations on Refugee Women. In 1991 Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women followed and the agency regularly reviews and updates key policies.

In 1984 the European Parliament approved what was then a revolutionary res-  
*Continued on page 10 ►*

# The world of refugee women at a glance

**There are approximately 50 million uprooted people around the world**—refugees who have sought safety in another country and people displaced within their own country. Between **75-80 percent** of them are women and children.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees cares for 21.8 million of these people. **Around half of them are women and girls.**

The majority of people flee their homes because of war and the proportion of war victims who are civilians leaped in recent decades **from five percent to over 90 percent** of casualties. **Eighty percent of casualties** by small arms are women and children, who far outnumber military casualties.

**Domestic violence** is the most widespread form of abuse against women with between one quarter and one half of women having been abused by

a partner. Only 44 countries specifically protect women against domestic violence.

Females are subject to **widespread sexual abuse.** In Bosnia and Rwanda rape became a deliberate aim of war. **More than 20,000 Muslim women** were raped in Bosnia in a single year, 1992, and a great majority of female survivors of Rwanda’s 1994 genocide were assaulted.

**One in five women worldwide** are victims of rape, many by known attackers. Between **40-60 percent of sexual assaults** are committed against girls younger than 16.

More than 300,000 youngsters, **many of them female refugees,** are currently serving as child soldiers around the world. The girls are often forced into different forms of **sexual slavery.**

**More than 16.4 million**

**women** today have HIV/AIDS and in the last few years, the percentage of women infected has risen from 41 to 47 percent of the affected population. In sub-Saharan Africa, teenage girls are five times more likely to be infected than boys.

The introduction of sex education and safety procedures can have dramatic results. In Uganda, **the rates of sexual infection among educated women dropped by more than half** between 1995 and 1997.

**Around 170 countries are party** to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocol—major instruments to protect women’s rights and to achieve gender equality.

The Statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted in 1998, giving it power to adjudicate a wide

spectrum of offenses **including rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and forced pregnancy.**

The majority of **trafficked people are women,** especially those bound for the world’s sex industries. Females are particularly vulnerable to trafficking because many have little individual security, economic opportunity or property or land ownership. The largest numbers of trafficked women **are from South-East and South Asia and the former Soviet Union nations.** Many victims are kidnapped or sold into slavery by their own families.

An estimated **45,000 households in Rwanda** are headed by children, 90 percent of them girls.

An estimated 1.3 billion people worldwide, **70 percent of them women,** live in absolute poverty on less than \$1 per day.

# Man-eating lions, crocodi

*It was a terrible ordeal for thousands of boys and girls—but each group*

by Emmanuel Nyabera

**R**emember The Lost Boys of Sudan? Well, what about The Lost Girls of Sudan?

The amazing odyssey of thousands of youths ripped from their homes in the late 1980s by fighting in Sudan and forced to wander for years across the East African savannah became the stuff of African legend.

They eventually reached Kenya where they languished in flyblown camps for years, becoming known as The Lost Boys of Sudan, intriguing refugee officials by their very survival, before the United States eventually agreed to resettle nearly 4,000 whose parents were dead or missing.

As they flew in small groups to all parts of America, the boys became instant celebrities, interviewed endlessly in the media about their amazing survival, their reactions to seeing snow, washing machines and skyscrapers for the first time and their thoughts about starting brand new lives.

Forgotten in all of this hoopla were the fates of several thousand girls aged between eight and 10 who had undergone similar ordeals.

Achol Kuol (*not her real name*) was seven when she, her mother and four brothers fled their southern Sudanese village because of vicious fighting between rebels and government troops. They trudged first to Ethiopia, returned to Sudan and then headed south to Kenya in a trek that lasted for years.

“There was little water to drink, we survived on leaves and wild fruit,” the teenager recalled. “Some of the girls were eaten by lions.” Somewhere in the bush she lost touch with her mother, who is still missing.

Another girl, Adeu, recalls crossing the River Gilo on the Sudanese-Ethiopian border: “I can remember being held by two of my uncles who were helping me across. One of them was swept away and that was the last time I saw him. I was later told he had been eaten by a crocodile” as had other civilians trying to cross the river.

The Sudanese youngsters, girls and boys, reached Kenya’s Kakuma refugee camp in the early 1990s.

The boys remained a reasonably identifiable group which finally caught the attention and sympathy of resettlement countries.

## UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Following Sudanese cultural traditions, many of the girls were absorbed into foster homes and left to a very uncertain fate, overlooked and forgotten by the outside world.

Achol Kuol has already survived one brutal attempt to kidnap her back to Sudan and into a forced marriage. Three Sudanese men tried to abduct the 17-year-old from the refugee camp, but she was saved by the intervention of local social workers and other refugees who chased the attackers away.

The girl believes this will only be the first of repeated attempts to marry her off. Arranged marriages, after all, are big business. Her first suitor had offered her foster parents 50 cattle, which represents a huge sum in Sudan, as a dowry.

Yar Jok (*not her real name*) was nine years old when she left her village. She does not even know where and when she lost her parents during her wanderings.

When she arrived at Kakuma she, too, was adopted by foster parents.



*Forgotten in the hoopla about Sudan’s Lost Boys were the fates of several thousand girls aged between 8-10 who had undergone similar ordeals.*



# les, famine...

*faces a very different future*

*One night a man entered her hut and raped her. She kept the assault a secret, worried that “if people got to know I had been raped, no man would want to marry me.”*

One night, a man entered her hut, stuffed her mouth with a piece of cloth and raped her. Initially, she kept the assault a secret. As in many societies, the victim of a rape among Sudanese is often judged as a guilty party and Yar Jok worried that “if people got to know I had been raped, no man would want to marry me.”

However, she was also now pregnant and her secret became obvious. She was rejected by both her foster parents and the refugee community but eventually moved in with a woman from her mother’s clan.

She named her baby Monday Riak—riak meaning ‘war’ in her Dinka language.

Like Achol Kuol, she is a worried woman. She fears no man will want to marry her, because her rapist may one day return and claim her daughter Monday who, among other things, would eventually be a source of wealth when she is ready to marry. Life on the fringes of Sudanese society can be very harsh.

At home both girls, like many others, are little more than unpaid servants, cooking, cleaning and collecting firewood.

Yar Jok joined a school for dropouts but cannot attend regularly because she must look after her baby. Other girls attend Kakuma’s secondary school.

Education, no matter how limited, offers a sliver of hope, but none of the girls have yet been given the opportunity to board a gleaming aircraft, learn to use a computer and plan a new life full of hope in a strange country.

There is a final small irony in this tale of two groups who shared the same tragedy but ended up with very different futures.

At one point in Kakuma, the boys were offered dry rations to eat. Out of tradition they refused to attempt to cook the food. That was women’s work. Sudan’s Lost Girls ended up preparing the meals. ■

UNHCR/W. STONE/CS-KEN/2002



**The ‘Lost Girls of Sudan’** have lived for years in a dusty camp in northern Kenya.

## FIGHTING FOR EQUAL RIGHTS...

olution asking member states to consider women who ran afoul of religious or social taboos as a “particular social group” for the purpose of determining whether they qualified for refugee status.

Canada, the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom and other countries followed suit with their own specific guidelines.

The Statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted in 1998, giving it power to adjudicate a wide spectrum of offenses including rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and forced pregnancy. Last year, the U.N. War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia handed down its first conviction for rape as a crime against humanity against three Bosnian Serb officers (REFUGEES N° 122).

Early in the new millennium a U.N. resolution committed governments to protect women from the abuses of war and include them in subsequent peace talks.

UNHCR/A. GESULEO/CS-RWA-1997



In the past, the vital distribution of food was often controlled by men and female refugees sometimes suffered.

A follow up Security Council statement reaffirmed its strong support for the inclusion of women in “negotiations and implementation of peace accords, constitutions and strategies for resettlement

and rebuilding.”

**VOICES:** “When a rebel broke into our house (in Sierra Leone), my mother was asked to give one of her children up or else

# Women in peacemaking *Six reasons*

by Swanee Hunt

**T**he issue of peacemaking has assumed special importance in today’s world. Why?

The wars we now experience are more dangerous, with weapons whose power to destroy spirals beyond our imagination. But our untapped resources—the leaders within more than half the world’s population who have been excluded in the strategies of international security—are also immense.

We must create a new paradigm in our foreign policy, a model of *inclusive security*. It must become unthinkable not to have women integrally involved in every stage of the peace process: whether conflict prevention, resolving the conflict, or post-conflict stabilization.

A U.N. official told me that warlords don’t want women on their teams because they’re afraid they’ll compromise. Isn’t that

the point? For lasting stability, we need peace promoters, not just warriors, at the negotiating table.

And there are at least six reasons women are valuable to peacemaking:

**FIRST**, women are generally adept at building relationships that bridge ethnic, religious and cultural divides due to their social and biological roles as nurturers. This notion has been ferociously challenged by some feminist theorists, but the women I have spoken to in conflict areas repeatedly say they are motivated by the need to ensure security for their families.

**SECOND**, they have their fingers on the pulse of the community where the agreement has to be lived. How odd that we have developed a way of reaching peace agreements that excludes these experts from the table. In 1994, I hosted negotiations during the Bosnian war and was amazed that the

60 or so people involved were only men. They divided the political positions among themselves but created no mechanism for indicted war criminals to be rounded up. Years later, towns still have officials who led the atrocities and millions in the Balkans are still displaced.

The **THIRD** reason women are particularly competent in the peace process is that they usually weren’t the ones behind the guns. They tell me they don’t have to go through the psychological process of converting a person into prey—like their husbands must—so they have less psychological distance to go in the reconciliation effort.

**FOURTH**, women—as second-class citizens—are not considered powerful enough to be dangerous. Palestinian Sumaya Farhat-Naser, of the Jerusalem Center for Women, says this feminine identity has deflected some of the daily violence in the Middle

*the entire family would be killed. My mother gave me up. The rebels took me with them and on our way to their camp I was raped by seven of them. I was held for one year. After I escaped, I asked myself 'Who will help me now?'*

This high-level activism spawned hundreds of special women's projects in the field. Suddenly there was funding, mainly from wealthy western nations and private organizations such as the Ted Turner Foundation. The new money helped provide better healthcare, improved food and water supplies, increased literacy and skills training, programs to study and combat sexual violence and the curse of sexual genital mutilation. Other projects helped women begin their own small businesses and become actively involved in refugee camp committees or other political, social and economic groups once they returned home.

A particularly effective program was developed in Central America to help an estimated 45,000 Guatemalans who fled a civil war in the 1980s and sought refuge in

Mexico. When women demanded a voice in negotiations to return home, UNHCR funded projects to develop women's rights, combat their illiteracy and improve health services and leadership skills.

Women were directly involved in repatriation negotiations and among the con-

cessions they won was recognition, for the first time, of the principle of equal ownership of both private and communal property. Although it took a decade of work, it is enshrined in Guatemalan jurisprudence, benefiting the entire population.

A similar law was enacted in the central ▶



**The collection of firewood presented a particular hazard for Somali refugees in Kenyan camps.**

## why women must be included in talks on international security

East and aided women to reach out to other communities in ways denied men. Still, because women are outside the power structure, the impact of their work is also limited.

But—**FIFTH**—precisely because women haven't been allowed a place within power structures, they are adept at finding solutions "outside the box," especially at the grassroots. Though under-funded, overlooked and often dismissed, innovative local leaders can mobilize and set their own agenda outside the close scrutiny of political parties or official establishments.

A **SIXTH** reason for having women involved throughout peace processes is that they have a remarkable ability to cross conflict lines. In 1977, nonsectarian women organizers in Northern Ireland won the Nobel Peace Prize for their public demonstrations, and a few years ago the North-

ern Ireland Women's Coalition was created, a political party that crosses the lines.

In response, there's progress on the policy front. The European Union, the Group of Eight largest industrialized nations and U.N. Security Council have issued grand statements insisting on the inclusion of women throughout the peace process. Words are good. Implementation would be better.

For example, there were compelling reasons to integrate women in the U.N.-sponsored Afghan peace process, but only three women among over 60 men selected an interim government for Afghanistan; and only two women chosen to head 29 ministries. Hardly a rousing success in a country where, in the past, 40 percent of government officials were women.

Kada Hotic is a Bosnian refugee from Srebrenica, a town overrun by Serb forces who raped massive numbers of women

and killed some 8,000 unarmed men and boys, including her son and husband. Even as a refugee, she built an organization to learn the truth behind the worst atrocity in Europe since World War II. But she also talks consolingly about those who destroyed her life: "That soldier who killed my son believed he was doing good for his people and for his religion." She recently told a Belgrade audience: "I am not here to say you're guilty. I wouldn't want what happened to me to happen to anyone of you. It's time to move on."

The next morning she received calls from other Serbian cities asking her to come speak. "Now I know I'm not alone," she said. "I can work with these people. Together, we can create a new future." ■

SWANEE HUNT is on the board of the USA for UNHCR, directs the Women and Public Policy Program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government and chairs Women Waging Peace ([womenwagingpeace.net](http://womenwagingpeace.net)).



**Education is often the key to a brighter future.** Girl returnees at school in Myanmar. Trying to combat harmful practices such as female genital mutilation in Ethiopia,

## FIGHTING FOR EQUAL RIGHTS...

African nation of Rwanda in the aftermath of that country's 1994 genocide, but that may have come too late to help many of the female survivors of that atrocity in which as many as one million people were killed. Some male relatives of victims had already claimed the land under older laws.

In Guinea recently, all adult refugees—men and women for the first time—were issued individual identity documents, giving the women far greater flexibility in such areas as food distributions and freedom of movement. That should become standard practice in any refugee community.

To meet the 'gender challenge' within humanitarian organizations themselves, greater numbers of women were recruited, specialized posts were created, sensitization programs developed for all staff and some budgets were rationalized to move nearer to equality.

**VOICES:** "Approximately one-third of Angolan households are headed by women who bear the burden of generating income as well as caring for their children. They have limited access to land, healthcare, education and other social services. They have no competitive skills and an increasing number of them opt for nocturnal lives on the streets."

Most humanitarian administrators, field staff and women refugees agree that more work needs to be done. But that appears to be the only point of convergence. There are sharp differences—often along gender lines—in judging the effectiveness of what has already been accomplished, how much more work is still necessary and what kind of nuts and bolts decisions and programs are needed to attain the lofty goals of genuine equality for refugees of both sexes.

One view suggests major strides have already been made with more effective international and national legislation to better protect women from sexual and other crimes, projects to improve their health,

food and education in refugee camps and to give them a better chance to either win asylum or successfully restart their lives if they eventually return home.

However, while acknowledging the special problems faced by females, these advocates caution that the overall operational thrust of a humanitarian organization like UNHCR could become 'distorted' if too much emphasis was placed on 'special' programs for any particular group. Some high level officials believed too that it was 'patronizing' and 'counterproductive' to concentrate on women's projects, because this would suggest that women refugees were incapable of doing things for themselves. Similar arguments infused the debate in the United States in recent years about the desirability of affirmative action programs for black Americans.

Moreover, according to some officials, increased numbers of women had also been recruited into humanitarian organizations which themselves had undergone fundamental change toward gender issues.

Serge Malé, UNHCR's senior epidemi-

SUDDENLY THERE WAS FUNDING TO PROVIDE BETTER HEALTHCARE, IMPROVED FOOD AND WATER SUPPLIES, INCREASED LITERACY AND SKILLS TRAINING, PROGRAMS TO STUDY AND COMBAT SEXUAL VIOLENCE...



Training can lead to jobs when women return home — work in a bakery in Chechnya and textile manufacture in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam.

“WHEN YOU ARE LOOKING FOR LEADERS, LOOK TO US. DO NOT THINK THAT BECAUSE WOMEN WEAR A VEIL, WE DO NOT HAVE A VOICE. THE LEADERSHIP OF MEN HAS ONLY BROUGHT WAR AND SUFFERING.”

ologist, recalls: “Fifteen years ago, refugee women were viewed through a one dimensional lens—as a mother. We did not see them as ‘complete women’—complicated human beings with an array of potential problems, not just childbirth. We have moved on from there in our attitude toward women and such problems as sexual violence or genital mutilation. There has been progress.”

**VOICES:** “Women are treated as helpless victims, rather than individuals who should be adequately consulted and informed on all decisions impacting their lives. This is reflected in political decisions taken by governments and humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR.”

The debate can be heated. The contrarian view, shared by many uprooted women, acknowledges ‘limited’ rather than ‘sweeping’ progress in bettering the lot of refugees, criticizes some programs and reforms as superficial and even counterproductive, and paints a picture of continued ingrained bias against change.

“There remains a baffling level of resistance in the humanitarian community towards an approach that seeks gender equality,” specialists Deborah Clifton and Fiona Gell wrote in a paper entitled Saving and Protecting Lives by Empowering Women. This stemmed from “a lack of understanding, skills and commitment to challenge discrimination which fundamentally reflects an inherent male bias,” in the humanitarian world.

Female refugees can be victims many times over. During a long flight into exile they lose the support of their government, their homes and often their husbands. Women, sometimes illiterate and sometimes barely in their teens, overnight can become breadwinner, physical protector or nurse to an entire family. Even when they reach ‘safety’ they are often prey to sexual predators or bullying immigration officials.

But one of the most insidious and, in the long term, debilitating approaches in trying to help these women, according to field specialists, is to over emphasize programs concentrating on basic priorities

like food and shelter.

While such projects are praiseworthy and necessary they come at a price—concentrating and prolonging the stereotype of the ‘vulnerable’ ‘hapless’ woman—but crucially underplaying so-called ‘empowerment’ projects which could provide them with better educational, economic and leadership skills and in turn enhance their roles in a camp or when they return home, rather than continuing to be second-class citizens.

One Afghan woman called Jamila echoed the frustration of refugee women repeatedly sidelined and overlooked when she told the recent U.N. Security Council meeting: “When you are looking for leaders, look to us. Do not think that because women wear a veil, we do not have a voice. I have often heard that Afghan women are not political; that peace and security is a man’s work. I am here to challenge that illusion. For the last 20 years of my life, the leadership of men has only brought war and suffering.”

“At the height of an emergency, with  
Continued on page 23 ►

| PHOTO ESSAY |

# REFUGEE WOMEN

Grace in Adversity

PHOTOS BY SEBASTIÃO SALGADO

| PHOTO ESSAY |

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACQUES CHALASANI



**BOSNIA**  
MOTHER AND CHILD  
AT BATNOGA CAMP

| PHOTO ESSAY |



**AFGHANISTAN**  
SURVIVING  
A HARSH REGIME



| PHOTO ESSAY |



**TURKEY**  
KURDISH REFUGEES  
COLLECT FIREWOOD  
NEAR IRAQI BORDER

| PHOTO ESSAY |



| PHOTO ESSAY |

VIET NAM  
SEARCHING FOR  
A BETTER FUTURE

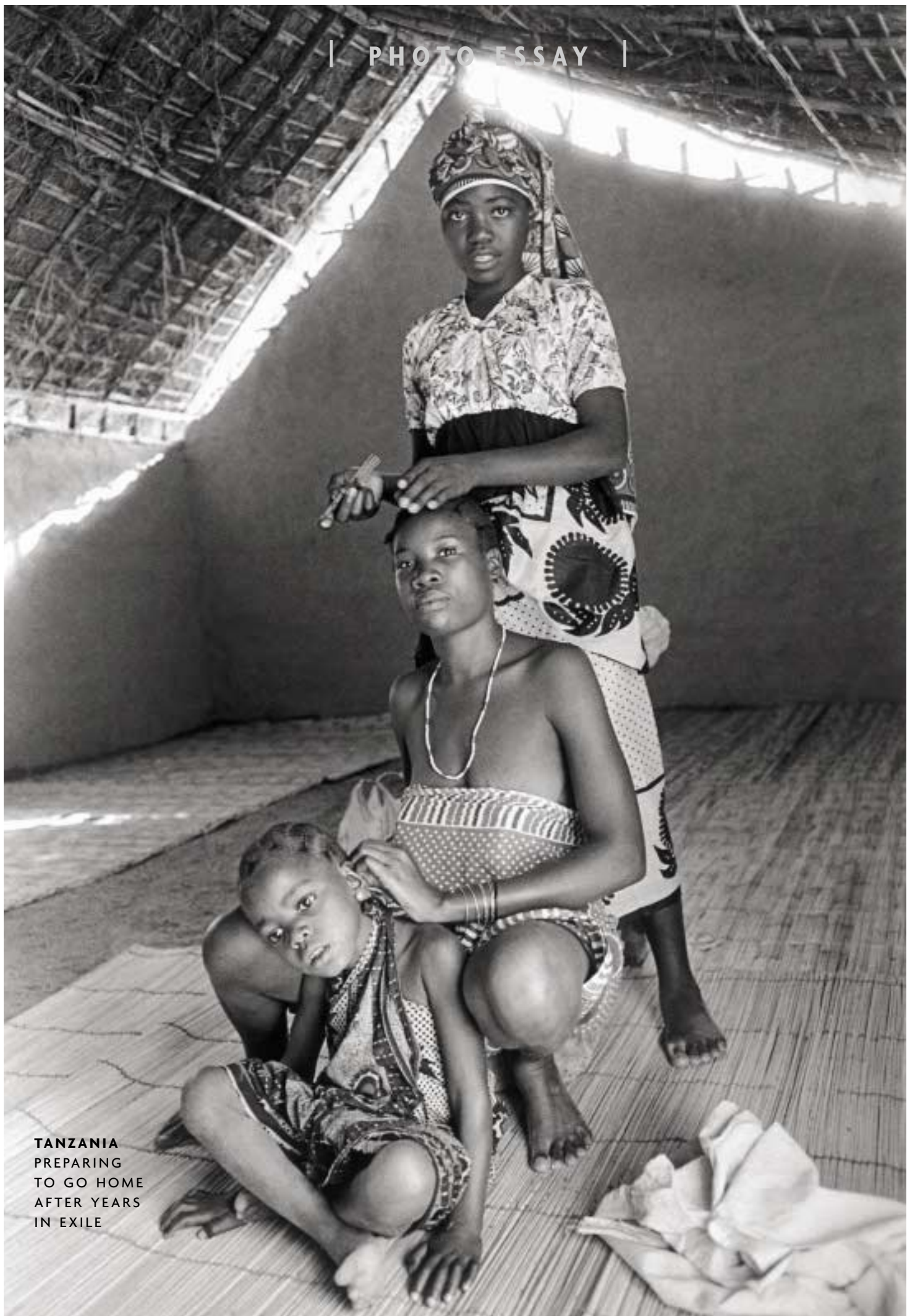


| PHOTO ESSAY |



What is your name?  
How old are you?  
Which school do you go to?  
Are you a boy or girl?  
What is your question?

| PHOTO ESSAY |



**TANZANIA**  
PREPARING  
TO GO HOME  
AFTER YEARS  
IN EXILE

COMPOUNDING ANY PERCEIVED ANTI-FEMALE BIAS IS ALSO THE TRICKY ISSUE OF CULTURAL BIAS AMONG REFUGEES AND FIELD STAFF TRYING TO HELP THEM.

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perhaps tens of thousands of people needing food and water immediately just to survive, we will save more lives and ensure that our initiatives will continue after the emergency if programs to help women in the long run are put in place from day one of a crisis,” Joyce Mends-Cole, UNHCR’s senior coordinator for refugee women said.

**VOICES:** “All the women (at a refugee conference in Canada) agreed that immigration judges are insensitive to asylum seekers, especially female applicants. Most adjudicators are uninformed about issues affecting women... and did not have much knowledge regarding the country of origin.”

Compounding any actual ‘anti-female bias’ is also the tricky issue of ‘cultural bias’ among refugees themselves and among the field staff trying to help them.

UNHCR, for instance, employs staff from around the world whose approach to any problem will be ‘colored’ to some degree by their own upbringing, whatever official guidelines are in place.

With the lives of refugees in turmoil, especially in the first days of a crisis, how far should aid agencies intervene in not only providing them with lifesaving food, water and shelter, but introducing programs which might alter the cultural balance of their societies?

Should girls and women, who at home may never have gone to school or made major family decisions, be taught to read and write and join refugee councils debating such weighty issues as food distribution, land distribution and returning home?

As a United Nations rights-based organization, UNHCR’s overall policy is clear, but the ‘bias battle’ continues every day in the field.

One field supervisor refused to introduce a schooling program in one Middle Eastern country with the argument that

educated women would find it difficult to get married and the comment that “I certainly wouldn’t marry such a woman myself.”

The issue of sanitary supplies to women has been a delicate issue, especially for male staff who are often reluctant to become involved or are simply ham-fisted. In one African town a male aide handed out supplies to girls in front of a mixed

Following repeated sexual attacks on Somali women in Kenyan refugee camps, camp layouts and lighting were improved and security tightened to try to eradicate the problem.

Such guidelines should be universal, but as Julie Mertus, a senior fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace and professor at the American University in Washington DC. noted recently “Nothing really changes.”



For the first time in years, Afghan women lift their veils in public.

class. The teenagers were mortified.

Though the issue of such supplies has been official UNHCR policy for years, implementation remains patchy. “My God, I thought this problem had been resolved 15 years ago,” one former field officer exclaimed when she heard that High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers had once more made the program a major priority.

In Guinea, home to hundreds of thousands of refugees, questions were raised at one camp about the safety and privacy of toilets and the need for a simple lock. “These women are not Muslims,” one harassed field official said. “Privacy is a luxury in crises.”

In the current Afghan crisis, for instance, “Washrooms, latrines and wells in camps are still built on grid patterns that ignore the needs of women. They are poorly lit and unguarded.”

Echoing the overworked official in Guinea quoted above, a longtime camp planner for Afghanistan commented: “This is an emergency. Everyone will get the same. There is no time for gender.”

Just how wide the male-female divide can open was perhaps illustrated in the case of The Lost Children of Sudan (see separate story page 8). In the late 1980s many thousands of youngsters fled their homes in the south of that country because ▶

## ▶ FIGHTING FOR EQUAL RIGHTS...

of years of civil war. They wandered the savannah for years, moving to Ethiopia, returning to Sudan before arriving at the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.

After their odyssey became widely known, the United States agreed to accept several thousand "lost boys" who became international celebrities as they started their new lives.

Girls suffered a different fate. Many were absorbed into foster homes where they became domestic servants and some entered arranged marriages. None were offered new lives abroad.

**VOICES:** "In 1981 when 452 boats arrived in Thailand carrying 15,479 refugees, UNHCR's statistics were a study of horror: 349 boats had been attacked an average of three times each; 578 women were raped, 228 women were abducted and 881 people were dead or missing."

Even well-meaning programs can have unexpected and, at times, tragic results. During the exodus of millions of boat people from Indochina following the end of the Viet Nam war, women became easy targets for pirates.

The United States earmarked millions of dollars for programs to improve their security and ensure that perpetrators were brought to justice. The results were tracked on what Christine Mougne now calls "that horrible map" in UNHCR's office in Bangkok, Thailand.

Each type of attack ranging from sexual violence to abductions and then murders was marked on the map by a different symbol. Initially, there appeared to be limited numbers of killings, but as more pirates were hauled into court for rape, so the number of boat people being abused and then coldbloodedly massacred and 'disappeared' into the sea climbed steeply. The symbols representing killings mushroomed across that map.

In Kenya, many women were raped as they scoured remote areas for firewood. A firewood project was launched in 1997 whereby supplies were trucked into camps, with the aim of reducing the vulnerability of women to sexual predators.

But a recent independent report suggested 'great caution' in describing the ex- ▶

# Playing games

*Sport is good for you, and that includes girls and women*

by Danya Chaikel

**W**hen 22-year-old Helena Ngonga fled her home in the Democratic Republic of Congo, she lost virtually everything. The young mother of two eventually reached a refugee camp on the outskirts of the Angolan capital of Luanda and one day recently she was busily organizing a soccer game for children—a seemingly routine event which nevertheless signified far more than a mere 'kick-around' for the participants.

Working as a coach has been a stepping stone for Helena—to a job as a pre-school teacher, a decent wage and newly discovered self-esteem. And in camps where boredom and monotony can break the spirit, sports are helping to teach teamwork and leadership and bolster the health of restless youngsters.

*There is little difficulty in encouraging boys to participate in sports, but the inclusion of women can be more delicate and difficult.*

Norway's gold medal speed skater Johan Koss and that country's Lillehammer Olympic Organizing Committee recognized in 1994 that the Olympic Games should mean more than glitz and

television hype and could be harnessed to the needs of children. Today, a small non-governmental organization, Olympic Aid and UNHCR have programs in Angola and 10 other countries to reinforce a basic tenet of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child that every youngster has the right to play and that sporting activities can be just as important as food and shelter for refugee children trying to overcome the trauma of war and displacement.

High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers told a specially convened Olympic Aid forum at this year's Salt Lake City winter games that "Play and teamwork can help heal emotional scars and restore at least some semblance of normalcy in the otherwise alien environment of a refugee camp." Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie, a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR, shared personal anecdotes from her visits to refugee camps. In Kibondo, Tanzania she



UNHCR/R. CHALASANI/CS-ETH/1998

**Somali refugee women take a break for volleyball at an Ethiopian refugee camp.**

met a quiet girl who kept to herself, having recently witnessed the murder of her parents and older brother. “I cannot imagine anything better for this girl than to be with other people, to play and to feel normal again. Olympic Aid’s work does this,” Jolie told the audience.

Under its Coach2Coach program, Olympic Aid recently recruited a group of volunteer coaches from Canada, the United States, Norway and Holland who are spending six months in refugee camps helping refugees such as Helena Ngonga to organize activities like football, volleyball, basketball, netball, track and field and even karate and gymnastics.

#### **ENCOURAGING WOMEN**

While there is little difficulty in encouraging boys to participate, the inclusion of women can sometimes be more delicate and difficult. Canadian coach Michael Hunter, who works in Angola’s Mussende camp, said women refugees are often separated from their husbands and must fend for the whole family in such circumstances “their physical and emotional well-being are the first things to be neglected.”

There can also be the problem of gender rivalry. When one young girl at Mussende tried to join in a soccer game, she was heckled by the boys. A coach kicked the ball back to the little girl and told the boys to include everyone. The game continued. Though the boys were clearly reluctant, one youngster eventually kicked the ball back. This time, she was not chased away.

Abby Schneider encountered similar problems in Pakelle in northern Uganda. “Outside of school the girls are responsible for household chores, like fetching water and taking care of their siblings,” the 21-year-old coach who helps at risk children back home in Saskatchewan, Canada, said. Adolescent girls are also reluc-

tant to join in because they can feel awkward or embarrassed and Schneider first asks them to help out with the games by organizing the younger children, saying that it is “easier for the girls to make the change from caregiver to group leader, than from caregiver to competitor.”

Susie Biro, a coach from Toronto, said it is hard for women and girls to leave their work for the “luxury of going out ‘to play’” in Benin’s Kpomasse camp. Plus bringing refugees from 22 coun-

tries together can be tricky. But when girls decided that they wanted their own football tournament they found a way. They circulated word in the camp about the approaching tournament, divided themselves into teams based on age and size rather than nationality and held a spirited competition.

Having female coaches makes a huge difference “As a woman, I have an easier time encouraging the girls to participate; they see me as a role model,” says Marian Scully who coaches Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees living around Danané, Côte d’Ivoire, approximately 800 kilometers west of the capital, Abidjan. “In one football game

with our coaches everyone was impressed to see females playing. One girl said it was the first time she had ever seen a girl trap and control the ball.”

Another Quebecois coach in Danané, Louise Hamelin, says girls are just as eager and creative as the boys, but “they have much less free time.” The idea of females doing sports, especially alongside males, is a novelty in many refugee communities—and much of the world. But slowly, people are getting used to it. “There is no doubt about it,” says Hamelin. “The men see us as strong and athletic.” Bit by bit, the presence of Olympic Aid’s coaches is changing the way that refugees see sport and gender. ■

*“As a woman,  
I have an easier  
time encouraging  
the girls to  
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see me as a role  
model.”*





Despite an increase in the number of women joining humanitarian agencies in the field, few reach high-level posts.

► **FIGHTING FOR EQUAL RIGHTS...**

tremely costly project as a success. While the number of rapes of women collecting wood dropped dramatically in some circumstances, sexual violence in other locations and contexts had increased even more. The report said the program “does not address all rape, nor does it contribute to the improvement of the overall security situation in and around Dadaab.”

Problems extend beyond the refugee camp—into areas where women try to claim asylum or to re-establish their lives

when they return home.

Women are often reluctant to describe deeply personal experiences such as sexual violence, even though such testimony might help them receive asylum. Male investigators and judges often admit their own ignorance of women’s problems.

Some wives are not given a chance to tell their own stories. There is still great

uncertainty about how to respond to women who are victims of domestic abuse—the major cause of injury to women worldwide.

When they do return home, women are often expected to ‘revert’ to the cultural norm of housewife and mother, whatever their wider refugee experiences.

Bosnian women who had travelled to

MANY PROGRAMS TENDED TO FOCUS ON WOMEN TO THE EXCLUSION OF MEN... FAILING TO PROMOTE SOCIAL CHANGE.

## “WOMEN MUST BE AT THE HEART OF THE SOLUTION TO CRISES AROUND THE WORLD.”

The upheavals of refugee life offer both a chance and a challenge for improving the lot of women. “Lives have been shattered, and we must recognize that fundamental changes have already taken place. Livelihoods have been lost, women are shouldering new responsibilities,” said Mends-Cole. “We must support change which is beneficial to women. We must listen to women and they will tell us what changes they want.”

Judging an opportune time to introduce change is always tricky, but equally the desire for progress even among the most conservative cultures should not be underestimated. When Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan in 1979, many traditional families fled, partly out of fear that their womenfolk could be ‘forced’ into new ways, including being sent to school. Today, many of these same families welcome that very opportunity for their daughters.

What is the way forward?

Two methods have been tried—establishing ‘special programs’ to address discrimination and inequality, and ‘mainstreaming’ the results of such women’s initiatives into the general operational structure of an organization. Neither approach has fully succeeded.

Instead, a Catch-22 situation developed. ‘Special programs’ are often left only to specialized staff operating them and ignored or downgraded by other members of an organization. Introducing them into general programming can mean they ‘submerge and then suffocate.’

There has also been only limited success in hiring more women for humanitarian organizations and then using their talents effectively to offer a more balanced and wider variety of views.

UNHCR in the last few years made a determined hiring push and while more women now fill more slots at lower levels, 80 percent of all senior and policy making posts at U.N. agencies are still dominated by men.

One recent report suggested, “Employing women fills a gender quota and is a palliative for those who criticize, but the women have no power to do anything within an organization or project.”

American University’s Julie Mertus out-

lined four major roadblocks to more effective assistance for women refugees: a continuing gap between policies formulated at a headquarters and field implementation; a failure to address the needs of millions of internally displaced persons in addition to bona fide refugees; the continued inability of women to obtain asylum; and the failure of ‘gender programs’ to address the situation of male refugees.

She suggested that many programs tended to focus on women to the exclusion of men and as a result of this neglect they fall short of their aims of ‘promoting social change.’

Ideas to improve the situation include both ongoing and new projects: the greater involvement of women in designing and running refugee camps and programs; further projects to halt sexual violence; continued counselling and emergency resettlement of victims and the employment of more female protection officers.

After travelling to West Africa recently, High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers said, “I promised women refugees we would do more to help them” and he responded with five commitments.

They include a target of 50 percent female participation in all camp, rural and urban refugee management and leadership committees; the individual registration of all adult male and female refugees; the development of further strategies to combat sexual and gender based violence; the direct participation of women in aid distribution and the provision of sanitary supplies on a regular basis.

“Women must be at the heart of the solution to crises around the world,” the High Commissioner said.

In 1995, Wairimu Karago, the then deputy director of UNHCR’s Department of International Protection said in an interview “We have everything. We have a beautiful policy on women. We have guidelines. But all this is only as good as the implementation.”

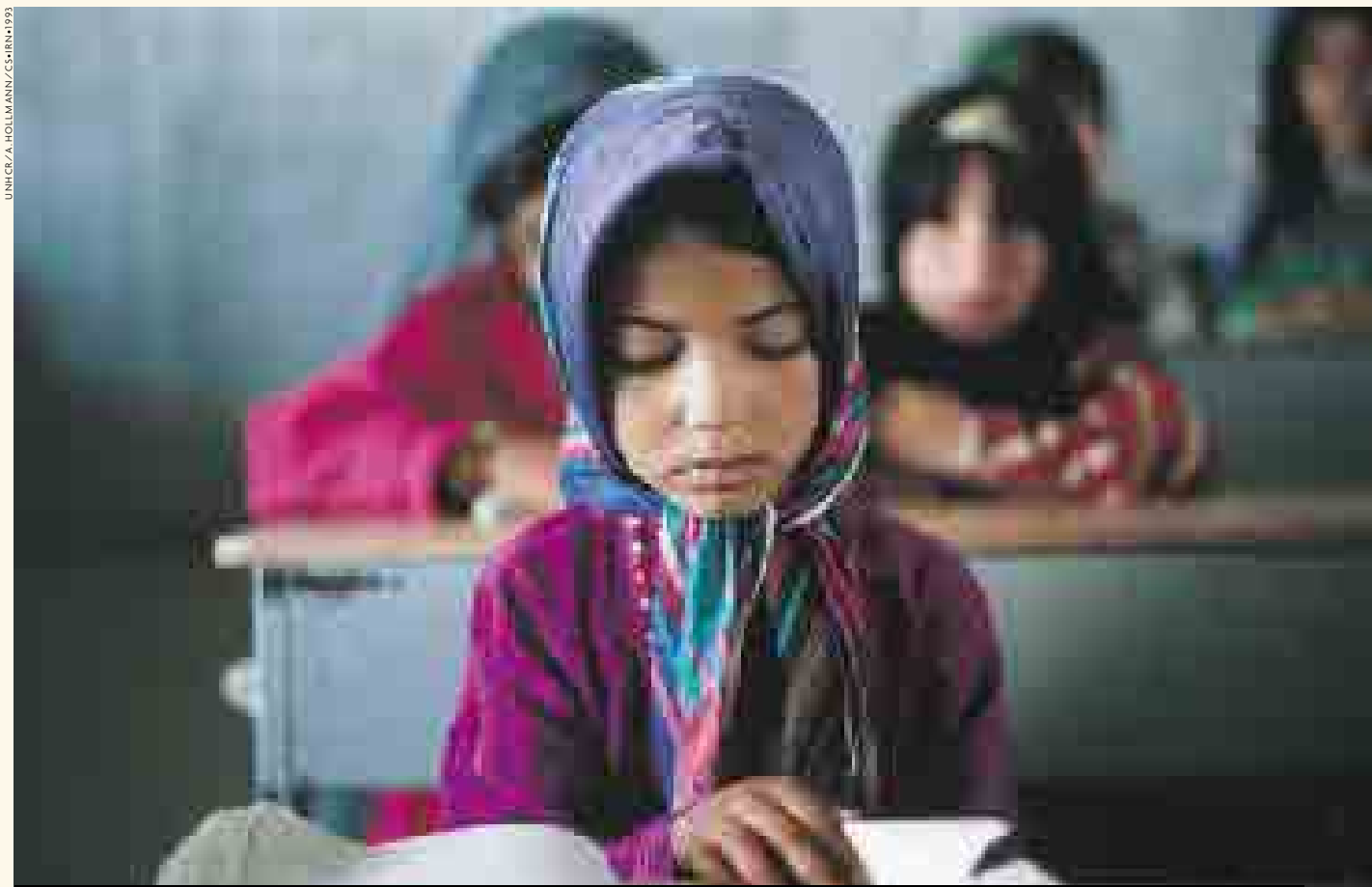
That remains as true today as it was then. ■

Europe and other countries as refugees during the Balkan wars found great difficulty in returning to the cloistered world of an isolated farmstead after the shooting stopped. All of the good work accomplished in Guatemala was threatened by male machismo and the attitude that: “Those special programs happened in exile. We’re home now. I’m the boss again.”

**VOICES:** “Masked gunmen broke into Natasa’s Bosnia home and proceeded to rob, beat and gang-rape her. She and her mother were thrown out of their home and lived for months in a basement without water or electricity, under constant bombardment. She found asylum in Europe, but wishes only to go home one day, when it is totally safe.”

# Educating Fahria...

*Refugee schooling has been an unexpected bonus for many Afghan girls*



UNHCR/A. HOLLMANN/CS+RHN/1993

**Girls who fled Afghanistan** received an unexpected bonus like this youngster in neighboring Iran: an education they would not have received at home under the Taliban.

by Michelle Brown and Veronika Martin

**W**ith her frosty blue nail polish, confident smile, and almost flawless American-accented English, 20-year-old Fahria challenges most stereotypes of Afghan women. She took a break from surfing the web at Mars Computer Center for refugee girls in the Pakistani city of Peshawar to describe her dream of returning to Afghanistan to become either a computer programmer or a doctor.

Fahria had fled three years earlier when the Taliban captured her hometown of Mazar-i-Sharif and barred girls from going to school. Her family promptly packed their belongings and moved to Pakistan so that Fahria and her sisters could continue their studies—a reason many other families gave for leaving Afghanistan.

Refugees often lose everything, but one of the ironies sur-

rounding the exodus of millions of Afghans in the last two decades is that huge numbers of girls were able to receive an education in exile—primarily in Pakistan and Iran—they would have been denied at home. This twist of fortune could play an important and positive role in the pending reconstruction of the shattered country.

“The education opportunities are good for Afghans in Pakistan,” Fahria said, and she personally has excelled. Most girls attending primary school complete only three years, but Fahria has now enrolled in a college diploma course in information technology and is also studying to become a doctor at the Afghan University in Peshawar, along with 900 other Afghan women. In her spare time she teaches English at the Iranian Council, earning some money to support her studies.

Like Fahria, 18-year-old Mahmooda and her sisters abandoned their education in the capital, Kabul when the Taliban came to

power. "I was forced to stay at home and do nothing," she recalls now. "Day by day, my life became worse."

Her father had lost a leg in the army and so four years ago they also headed to Pakistan where the women could work to support the family and the girls could continue school.

Unlike Fahria, whose excellent English allows her to earn a modest salary, the shy, 18-year-old Mahmooda struggles to pay school fees of \$1.20 a month. Each day she weaves carpets and embroiders shawls in a dimly lit room until two o'clock in the morning. Four hours later, she must prepare for school.

### A BRIGHTER FUTURE

In some respects, this experiment in girls' education has been a remarkable success. In the last five years, the number attending UNHCR-sponsored primary schools in Pakistan increased five-fold and UNHCR community services officer Anne Siri said, "There are no girls who are reluctant to learn. They love it." In Iran, the picture has been the same, with girls making up nearly half of primary school students.

In Afghanistan itself, there is an 'educational buzz' in the air. Rebuilding from scratch, the government promised to reopen 3,500 schools for 1.5 million boys and girls as soon as possible. Classrooms which have already opened, though bare and cold, are packed. At one school in Kabul, girls sit in neat rows on pieces of cloth on the freezing concrete floor, eyes glued to the teacher. The school's principal returned to her post after teaching girls in secret during the Taliban rule.

For five years, 16-year-old Khalida and 30 other students attended one of these underground classrooms only a stone's throw from Taliban headquarters in Kabul. "We were scared to go to school, we did not carry our books and we studied in secret," Khalida recalls. Her new school is housed in a bombed-out building with a shattered roof on the edge of Kabul. "We have no chairs, no books, and the teachers have no salary," she said. "When it snows we use only those classrooms that have a roof, but learning is important. One day I want to be a doctor."

A fellow student, 17-year-old Parnyan, echoes her enthusiasm about her school's reopening: "I have been looking forward to this for more than five years. I can't explain it. I was so happy. I thought I was dreaming."

### DIFFICULT TIMES

Despite these encouraging signs, there have been earlier disappointments and the prospect of future problems.

Hundreds of thousands of young people were educated in exile, but because of a shortage of international funds and other problems, several million youngsters were denied the opportunity of even a basic education. When they eventually return home these disenfranchised students will do so with few skills or opportunity to earn a living in a nation which is trying to rebuild itself from scratch and needs all the expertise it can find, including an estimated 100,000 new teachers.

There are still an estimated 3.5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran and their decision on whether to return home will be influenced not only by economic and security conditions, but also on the availability and level of schooling.

For those who have already returned, there has been a

rude awakening. After spending eight years in Pakistan, Latifa recently went back to Kabul and like many others, was apparently shocked at the state of the educational system. "In Pakistan we had many facilities," she said, "but it is different here. There are no chairs and no supplies. The teachers do not receive a salary so they often come late. I hope that I can begin to study in a school that has chairs, carpets and good teachers."

*One of the ironies surrounding the exodus of millions of Afghans... is that huge numbers of girls received an education they would have been denied at home.*

There is also the urban-rural divide, and long held assumptions that daughters in farm families do not want or need an education. That, according to Sima Samar, the interim Minister of Women's Affairs and a leader in rural development, is outdated.

"In one rural village a group of conservative elders, all ordinary men, came to me to ask if I could start a school for girls," she said. "Before, there was no school, but

now they want one. They want their daughters to be educated. They see education as an opportunity."

Eighteen-year-old Mahmooda will return home soon, acknowledging that she will probably have to continue to embroider scarves to help her family survive, but she has faith in the power of education.

"Uneducated people are like blind people," she said. "When they travel to a new place, they can't even read signs and they don't know where they are. I hope that people won't feel like they are blind for much longer." ■

*The authors are staff members of the American humanitarian group Refugees International.*



**With a new government installed in Kabul, school's open again.**

# From exile to the presidency...

*She escaped the Soviet deportation trains  
to become leader of her country*



**Latvia's President**, once a refugee, with High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers.

**T**hree weeks and three days after my family left the shores of Latvia, my little sister died. We buried her by the roadside, but we were never able to return or put a flower on her grave," Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga remembered. "And I like to think that I stand here today as a survivor who speaks for all of those who died by the roadside, some buried by their families and others not."

By general consent, the speech by the President of the small north European nation of Latvia was the most poignant moment at a recent summit meeting in Geneva attended by 156 countries which pledged to strengthen global efforts to help millions of today's refugees.

Vīķe-Freiberga, together with her parents, fled Soviet-occupied Latvia in 1944 when she was seven years old. The family

Institute and within a year became the country's president.

Millions of women have survived 'the refugee experience.' The great majority eventually return home to continue unheralded, often harsh existences. Vīķe-Freiberga's experience underlined that with the right help, a little bit of luck and lots of resilience, anything is possible.

#### DEPORTATION OR FLIGHT

"When the moment comes to leave your home, it is a painful moment," Vīķe-Freiberga told the Geneva delegates. "My parents had a choice to stay behind and risk

meandered through Poland, Germany and French Morocco before, by a simple twist of fate which can radically alter a refugee's future, headed toward Canada.

"We were 20 people to a room in double-tiered bunks" in one camp, she recalled. "You get to know people very intimately in such circumstances. Friendships are kept up and our fellow refugees wrote us saying, 'Life is hard in Canada. But if you work hard, you can get ahead. So why don't you come here?'"

She did. She became a leading academic, travelled the world as a lecturer, returned to her homeland to head a newly launched Latvian

the deportations they had already witnessed... being put into cattle cars after having been awakened in the middle of the night and shipped off to Siberia or to just walk out of their homes with what they could carry in their two hands, walk off into the unknown."

A harrowing experience awaited. "It is always a painful condition not to know where you are going to lay your head, to look at the lights shining in distant windows, to think of people living their normal lives, sleeping in their own beds, eating at their own table, living under their own roofs.

"And later when you come to refugee camps... you are living outside of space and of time, you have no roots, you have no past, you don't know whether you have a future. You have no rights, you have no voice, you have nothing to participate in, you are not a citizen, you have no papers, sometimes you haven't even got your name. You have to pinch yourself to reassure yourself that, yes, I am alive, I am me, I am a human being, I am a person."

Millions of civilians continue to suffer

today. "They are out there in the tents, by the roadsides, starving, freezing, waiting, hoping for someone to extend a helping hand," the Latvian president said, hovering between "being a human being with dignity or being less than the beasts of the field,

*"You are living outside of space and of time, you have no roots, you have no past, you don't know whether you have a future."*

trodden under in the dust of this world.

"I don't know whether we can do it in the next five years or 50 or 100, but I do know we have no choice," she said. "We must act. We must do something." ■



## “Women must be at the heart of the solution to crises around the world.”

*U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Ruud Lubbers.*

**“I have the toughest job in Afghanistan. But I have no budget, no staff and little support from colleagues in government.”**

*Sima Samar, Minister for Women’s Affairs in Afghanistan’s interim government.*



**“Parting with my baby was hard. But watching my family die slowly from hunger is even worse.”**

*An Afghan farmer explaining why he sold his four-day-old son to a more prosperous family for the equivalent of \$60.*



**“I don’t know whether we can do it in the next five years or 50 or 100, but I do**

**know we have no choice. We must act.”**

*Vaira Vike-Freiberga, once a refugee, but now the President of Latvia.*



**“We have no chairs, no books and the teachers have no salary. When it snows we use only those classrooms that have a roof. But learning is important.”**

*A young Afghan teenager delighted to be back at school after years of being denied an education.*



**“Whenever I look into the eyes of a refugee child, I see something of myself. If circumstances had been**

**different and time had stood still...”**

*Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, recalling her own days as a refugee.*



**“There was little to drink, we survived on leaves and wild fruit. Some of the girls were eaten by lions.”**

*One of the ‘Lost Girls of Sudan’ describing an ordeal which lasted years in the East African bush.*



**“Fifteen years ago, refugee women were viewed through a one-dimensional lens—as a mother. We did not see them as complicated human beings with an array of potential problems, not just childbirth.**

*UNHCR senior epidemiologist*

*Serge Malé on changing attitudes toward refugee women.*



**“The current situation of change of power and instability in Afghanistan may lead to increased violence against women in an atmosphere of impunity.”**

*U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan warns about the uncertain situation for females in Afghanistan.*



**“I will respect the rights and freedoms of the United Kingdom. I will uphold its democratic values. I will observe its laws faithfully and fulfill my duties and obligations as a British citizen.”**

*A proposed oath that would-be British citizens, including refugees, would swear in future.*



**States should “include women in the negotiations and implementation of peace accords, constitutions and strategies for resettlement and rebuilding.”**

*A U.N. Security Council statement supporting the greater inclusion of women in major negotiations on such issues as peace talks and resettling uprooted populations.*



**“There’s been nothing like it in history. We are embarking on rebuilding a country from scratch.”**

*Regional U.N. coordinator Leslie Oqvist on international efforts to begin rebuilding Afghanistan.*