

ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOS 3 – 5 JULY 2012 - International Conference Center Geneva

BACKGROUND PAPER

Marginalization and Social Exclusion of Particular Refugee Populations

Wednesday 4 July 2012, 14h30 – 16h15 – Room 4

Socially-excluded groups are impacted particularly harshly during the displacement cycle. They are often shunned or discriminated against by other refugees, local populations and service providers in countries of flight. Frequently, their multiple marginalizations militate against their protection. Moreover, these refugees often adopt negative coping mechanisms that expose them to an even higher risk of exclusion and exploitation. Each member of the panel will discuss a particular ground or cluster of social exclusion and will highlight a program or strategy to narrow identified protection gaps.

This session is moderated by Volker Türk, Director of the Division of International Protection.

Tshepo Garethata, Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS):

Refugees & Asylum Seekers Living with HIV

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Botswana is estimated at 17.5%. As originally implemented, the Government of Botswana's free-of-charge HIV/AIDS treatment programme did not extend to refugees or asylum seekers, many of whom lived in despair and died. With the support of UNHCR, BRCS successfully advocated for the extension of these services to refugees and asylum seekers. In 2009, with the support of UNHCR, the BRCS initiated its treatment programme, which currently serves 9.89% of refugees and asylum seekers in the country. Within three years, this initiative has reduced death rates dramatically, prolonged life spans and eliminated the HIV infection rate among babies. Ms. Garethata will present the programme's implementation as a model for successful intervention on behalf of this highly vulnerable group.

Emma Pearce, Women's Refugee Commission (WRC): Refugees with Disabilities

The presentation will cover current work with UNHCR on implementing UNHCR's Executive Committee *Conclusion on Refugees with Disabilities and Other Persons with Disabilities Protected and Assisted by UNHCR*, as well as its accompanying *Need to Know Guidance: Working with Persons with Disabilities in Forced Displacement*. To promote implementation, WRC engages in field-based disability inclusion trainings before UNHCR NGO Consultations. As of this time, it has conducted seven trainings in India, Uganda, Bangladesh and Thailand, bringing together UNHCR and NGO staff as well as local Disabled People's Organizations and refugees with disabilities. At the conclusion of each training, stakeholders develop and agree to undertake priority actions to increase access of refugees with disabilities to all programs and services. Ms. Pearce will discuss learning generated from this model of concluding trainings with respect to action and possible next steps.

Carl Sonderbergh, Minority Rights Group International (MRGI): Minorities & Indigenous Peoples

Ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples are among the most marginalised communities in many societies. They are often excluded from participation in socio-economic life and rarely have access to political processes. In many parts of the world, they are the victims of severe human rights violations, violence, and in extreme cases, genocide. The challenges faced by these communities multiply during forced displacement. Moreover, members of these communities comprise a large proportion of those seeking international protection. Mr. Soderbergh will highlight MRG's advocacy work as well as capacity-building amongst minority and indigenous communities, including those displaced in conflict and post-conflict situations. MRG trains community leaders in human rights, international advocacy, gender issues, media skills and conflict resolution. The organization is currently conducting such programmes amongst Bantu, Benadiri and caste groups in Somalia, religious minorities in Iraq and Muslim and Tamil communities in Sri Lanka. These programmes help to ensure greater attention to minority issues at both the national and international levels.

Neil Grungras, ORAM - Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration (ORAM): Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex (LGBTI) Refugees & Asylum Seekers

LGBTI refugees are among the most marginalised in the world. They face hate violence and ostracism by other refugees and local populations alike and are afraid to seek formal protection. Despite recent attention on the advocacy stage, LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers are excluded virtually wholesale from the international refugee protection regime. The assistance of NGOs is thus essential for this critically vulnerable population. Mr. Grungras will present the results of ORAM's ground-breaking study of hundreds of NGOs worldwide, exploring their attitudes toward and service of LGBTI individuals. Prepared with guidance from UNHCR and in conjunction with a major university, the questionnaire underlying this report was transmitted in a survey dispatched to 1,465 NGOs worldwide. ORAM's report depicts an environment which is at once compassionate and foreboding for LGBTI individuals. It points to abundant opportunities for carving out safe space for these individuals. ORAM's was the first known international survey of refugee NGOs ever conducted on any issue.

Dr. Chris Dolan, Refugee Law Project, Makerere University, Uganda:

Model for Working with Excluded Social Groups

Working effectively with sexual minority refugees and on sexual rights issues is a challenge confronting UNHCR and refugee assistance NGOs in many corners of the globe. Individual LGBTI persons are rarely known to officers as they have not disclosed their identity. Their behaviors, if not their identities, are frequently criminalized in national laws. Where state and religion combine to create homophobic cultures, these are as present inside organizations as in the wider society. Dr. Dolan will provide a case study of steps taken inside Refugee Law Project, a Ugandan community outreach project of the School of Law at Makerere University, to promote a more inclusionary perspective into its work with refugees. The presentation will document the combination of internal work in the form of training, exposure, and policy reforms, with pro-active engagement on the issues in public spaces and with donors. It will make the case that, rather than treating sexual minority issues as a separate category, they should be considered as part of a broader raft of social exclusions.