

women's asylum news

refugee women's resource project @ asylumaid

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Please forward any information that you would like to include in the next edition of WAN to Claireb@asylumaid.org.uk by the 1st February 2008.

Safe to Return?

Pakistani women, domestic violence and access to refugee protection

New Research Published

South Manchester Law Centre's WASP project (Women Asylum Seekers from Pakistan) has published a ground-breaking report: *Safe to Return? Pakistani women, domestic violence and access to refugee protection – a report of a trans-national research project conducted in the UK and Pakistan*. The report has been published in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University.

This report comprehensively discusses a wide range of complex issues regarding Pakistani women's experience of domestic violence and the asylum process. The research included conducting field-work in both the UK and Pakistan. This approach provided a holistic analysis of the nature of domestic violence, access to services, safety, legal support and representation in both the UK and Pakistan.

The findings from the research report provide information and evidence which are crucial to legal representatives, people who work in the domestic violence sector and women asylum seekers.

Below Sajida Ismail, Researcher from the WASP project outlines some of the main themes addressed in the report.

- 'Refugee Protection' as a form of safety against domestic violence. The research argues that the majority of women in Pakistan are unaware that they can seek international protection against domestic violence under international refugee law.

The study found that most women in Pakistan sought or asked for protection in-country.

- The diversity of women's experiences. The research highlights a need to deconstruct understandings of domestic violence. The report argues for a need to move debates away from singular 'culturalist' notions of violence to an examination of the interplay between gender, culture and race.
- The context of violence. This trans-national study highlights ways in which structural, political, cultural and racial frameworks in Pakistan and the UK are central to the creation of conditions in which women could be subjected to violence.
- Perceptions of Pakistani women asylum seekers. The research argues that the prevailing perception within the UK asylum system of a 'typical' Pakistani asylum-seeking woman is that she is an economic migrant. Thus, women who seek asylum are often constructed as 'immigrant women.' The report argues that Pakistani asylum seeking women are defined by their connection to 'backward' and unchanging practices. Whilst this perception does place women inevitably as 'victims', any claim a woman might make to a *particular* experience of victimisation remains obscured.
- The role of women in Pakistan. The findings generated from the research conducted in Pakistan highlighted societal perceptions around the nature and role of women which hindered women's potential to be independent. Significantly, within the UK's asylum system similar conceptualisations of Pakistani women exposed flawed approaches to decision making.
- Minoritised women. 'Other' women who are similarly presented in problematic terms, include 'abandoned women,' non-

Muslim Pakistani women (for example Christian women) and Ahmadiye women.

- 'Culture of disbelief.' The research revealed a continuing 'culture of disbelief' within the Home Office that contributed to the difficulty of evidencing violence in asylum cases.
- Internal flight. The controversy surrounding the concept of internal flight stems from the lack of uniform and principled application of it by decision-makers. Despite this, the research argues that internal flight is increasingly used to deny Pakistani women asylum when they cannot produce 'enough' or 'appropriate' evidence to negate the internal flight decision.
- No Recourse to Public Funds. The NRPF rule now represents a major and serious barrier to accessing services and justice. The research states that NRPF contributes to many women with insecure immigration status remaining in violent relationships.
- Service provision in the UK. This research stipulates that domestic violence support services in the UK are consistently perceived to be poorly resourced, thin on the ground, over-subscribed, culturally unaware or, at times, culturally inappropriate.
- Service provision in Pakistan: service 'breakdown.' The research argues certain parallels can be drawn between deficiencies in both UK and Pakistani provision of services for women who have experienced domestic violence. However, the report outlines that in Pakistan there is a particularly severe lack of provision, leaving many women fleeing domestic violence facing extreme difficulties.
- Shelters in Pakistan: specific concerns. The fieldwork conducted in Pakistan highlights that the majority of shelters are grossly under resourced, overcrowded, provide sub-standard

facilities, rarely have a key worker system, offer poor working conditions, no casework supervision and no training or worker accountability. These shelters are unable to offer the necessary support required to address women's complex needs.

- Services for young women and girls. The research discusses the absence of specific provision for young women and girls. This reinforces the complex relationship between perceptions of girls in particular, as adult women and the lack of attention to their specific needs in domestic violence contexts.
- Building an infrastructure for service provision in Pakistan. The report recommends a thorough review and evaluation of existing services and assessment of future need be conducted urgently. The review should include all regions, including both rural and urban.
- Consequences of domestic violence. This study highlights how domestic violence impacts on women's medical conditions including physical and mental ill-health. Such conditions have far-reaching consequences including women's ability to become educationally and economically active, and to participate in public and economic life.
- Children. The research primarily focused on adult women and not on children, however a range of situations arose whereby this distinction was challenged. For example, the findings revealed that some women were defined by their 'childlessness', some mothers were treated like children and some children were deemed to be women. For this study, the overarching feature of these complex intersections was the nature of (predominantly) male power and control, manifested through domestic violence, to regulate women and (usually female) children.
- Pakistan and the UK: commonalities and differences. Throughout the study

different elements of systems and practices within the two countries were linked and discussed. The findings revealed that structural commonalities within the different national contexts emerged, maintained by laws, political structures, cultural norms and socio-economic barriers. Together, these contributed to women's subjugation.

- Safe to return? The research explored issues women who flee domestic violence may face in Pakistan. The findings state that in Pakistan, women are required to travel vast geographical distances and to overcome considerable practical, cultural and psychological barriers to seek some form of safety. Conversely, the vastness of geographical possibility within Pakistan is frequently relied upon in UK asylum and immigration contexts as an opportunity to relocate to 'safety' without 'undue hardship'. The tensions presented by these opposing positions suggest a need to explicate what 'safety' in this context means, and to where in Pakistan a woman should 'return'.
- Training for service providers. The research concludes that greater 'cultural awareness' training and training on domestic violence issues is needed in both the UK and Pakistan.

Safe to Return? Pakistani women, domestic violence and access to refugee protection – a report of a trans-national research project conducted in the UK and Pakistan

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Special thanks to Sajida Ismail for writing this summary

RWRP news

RWRP Play '*Random Acts*'

December 2007 saw the first performance of the RWRP play '*Random Acts*' at St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, London. Written by RWRP Coordinator Debora Singer '*Random Acts*' tells the story of a female asylum seeker going through the asylum process in the UK. The fifteen-minute play is largely based around a Tribunal Hearing and covers significant issues regarding legal representation, knowledge of gender-related persecution, protection and individual anxieties.

The protagonist in '*Random Acts*' is fictional, however all issues, events and experiences raised are based on a number of RWRP clients and actual Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) and Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT) responses.

The play was performed by Actors for Refugees alongside '*Asylum Monologues*' by Sonja Linden. The evening was designed to raise awareness about the asylum process and issues asylum seekers face. The free event was a success and over 60 people who largely worked outside of the asylum and refugee sector attended.

RWRP intends to continue to use the play to raise awareness and is seeking funding to get it filmed.

The next performance of '*Random Acts*' will be at Asylum Aids Annual General Meeting (AGM) on the 31st January 2008. The meeting will be held at St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, London

If you wish to attend the AGM, please telephone: 020 7354 9631

or email: malakb@asylumaid.org.uk

Asylum is not gender neutral: a practical advocacy guide for protecting women seeking asylum

RWRP and the European Women's Lobby are calling on NGOs within the European Union to lobby for the gender-sensitive implementation of the EU Qualification and Procedures Directives. They have jointly published a practical advocacy guide that suggests ways in which women's, asylum/refugee, human rights, lesbian and gay organisations can take steps to monitor implementation at a national level. Focusing on the relevant articles in both Directives, the guide shows how the UNHCR Gender Guidelines, adopted in 2002, can provide an essential tool for implementing the Directives in a gender sensitive manner. This is both in terms of how gender persecution should be interpreted and what procedural issues need to be considered when assessing substantive claims by women. The publication comes at a crucial time as 2008 will set the pace for the second phase of the European Common Asylum System that will include an evaluation of both Directives.

RWRP would welcome feedback from readers on this new lobbying tool, available at: <http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/publications.php?id=70>

Sector Update

Home Affairs Committee e-Consultation into Domestic Violence and Forced Marriage

The Home Affairs Select Committee is holding an e-Consultation as part of its current inquiry into domestic violence. The e-Consultation is particularly targeted to hear the experiences of survivors of domestic violence, including forced marriage and honour-based violence.

Information gathered from the e-Consultation will be used alongside expert evidence to make recommendations to the Government about its policy, services and legislation on domestic violence and forced marriage. Quotes from the e-Consultation will be used to support the Committee's final report and recommendations.

The e-Consultation will run for 6 weeks and will consist of a message board arranged around a small number of discussion topics. Discussion topics will include the prevention and identification of abuse; victims' experiences of support services, including for specific needs (such as LGBT, BME or male victims); and experience of the criminal justice system (police, courts, prisons and probation).

Participants who access the site will be asked to select an anonymous username and password. To reassure users, they will not be asked for any further registration details to promote absolute anonymity. Participants will then be able to read posts on the site, and reply to or add their own comments.

The e-Consultation will open on **21 January 2008** and run until **29 February 2008** at <http://forums.parliament.uk/dvec>

For further information about the e-Consultation please contact:

Gemma Buckland
Email: bucklandg@parliament.uk
or Lis Bates
Email: batese@parliament.uk

The terms of reference for the e-Consultation can be found at: http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/home_affairs_committee/hacpn07_0726no38.cfm

Access to GP services for vulnerable migrants

A joint Home Office/Department of Health review is currently underway on access to NHS health care for foreign nationals. The review is expected to be released in January 2008.

One of the key questions under consideration is entitlement to free NHS GP services. At present, GPs have discretion to register refused asylum seekers. If regulations governing entitlement to GP services are brought into line with those governing hospital care, then refused asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants would be required to pay in advance for GP appointments.

Medact has prepared a briefing paper on the proposed changes and a second paper examining the implications for maternal health.

A number of NGOs are lobbying against any further restrictions on access to healthcare for vulnerable migrants. In December 2007, a Parliamentary meeting was held and an Early Day Motion was tabled. Concerned individuals are encouraged to write to their MP about the proposed changes.

For more information contact:
Rosalind Bragg at Medact
Email: rosbragg@medact.org
or telephone: 020 7324 4727

The briefing papers are available at: http://www.medact.org/ref_entitlement_page.php

Gender Sensitive Interviews- update

For a woman-claiming asylum, disclosure of any experiences of rape or sexual violence at an early stage in the asylum process is essential for the fair determination of her case. It is recognised that some women find it easier to disclose such experiences to another woman. In June 2007 the Border

and Immigration Agency (BIA) agreed to ask whether applicants had a preference as to the gender of their Case Owner.¹ From late December 2007 the BIA have started asking all applicants at screening as to whether they have a preference. RWRP are interested in receiving feedback from anyone who has been through screening since then (or knows someone who has) as to how the system is working.

RWRP are still in discussion with the BIA as to how exactly this policy should be implemented (eg whether all applicants should be asked or just female applicants) and are responding to a consultation on the exact wording of the question as part of the Women's National Commission.

UK News

Lesbian asylum seekers fear return

Sally Howard writes in the Guardian newspaper about the asylum process for lesbian asylum seekers since the House of Lords ruling of *Shah and Islam*.² She summarises the situation for Brenda from Kingston Jamaica, where residents held a 'gay eradication day'. Brenda experienced rape, beatings and her possessions have been smeared with faeces because of her sexuality. The Home Office have stated that upon return Brenda should "try not to act gay". Similarly, Patricia from West Africa did not disclose her sexuality immediately upon claiming asylum in the UK. When she did, the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT) deemed this as a false claim. Howard's research also reveals the situation for a Ugandan woman who had written notice that she was banned from a village due to what the village believed were 'obscene acts with another woman'. Although this document is part of the woman's ID and is verified with a

¹ See Women's Asylum News, Issue 68 August 2007, p3

² *Islam v. Secretary of State for the Home Department Immigration Appeal Tribunal and Another, Ex Parte Islam Shah R v.* [1999] UKHL 20; [1999] 2 AC 629; [1999] 2 All ER 545 (25th March, 1999)

stamp, the Home Office dismissed this as evidence as the card was hand written. Russell Blakely, a solicitor working with asylum seekers comments that the Home Office is "intellectually dishonest because of the political climate, they're an agency fuelled by suspicion and denial. They approach each case with the assumption the asylum seeker is lying about the persecution they face at home. If we manage to prove they're not lying, the board will deny that any abuse comes under their frustrating, nonsensical definition of 'real' persecution." He also criticises the 'fast-track' system and the Home Office's over reliance on the Asylum Policy Operation Guidance Notes that are often inaccurate and out of date. Howard's article concludes, "Somewhere amid the thicket of tabloid scares and twitchy Home Office responses, human rights and fair treatment have been lost" For full article see:

http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/sally_howard/2007/11/try_not_to_act_gay.html

As part of Howard's research she attended a forum hosted by the UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group. For further information about this organisation see:

<http://www.uklgig.org.uk/>

Ugandan asylum seeker separated from baby

The Guardian briefly covered the situation of Janipher Maseko in May 2007³. In November, Melissa Benn wrote a full article on Janipher's story. The article raises several questions about the UK asylum process including age disputes, detention and destitution. Janipher Maseko fled Uganda to the UK in 2002. Although aged 13, Janipher's age was disputed and she was believed to be 16 and granted two years leave to remain until her estimated '18th' birthday. Janipher was refused an extension for leave to remain and her subsequent appeal was rejected. During this process she experienced many problems regarding accessing information, finding a solicitor and

³ see Women's Asylum News, Issue 67 June/July 2007 p.8

inputting into her case. In March 2007, Janipher reached the 'end of the line' with the asylum process and now with a one-year-old daughter and heavily pregnant with a second child, she was refused any accommodation, benefits and vouchers. Janipher was sleeping on the streets when she was admitted to hospital to give birth to her second child. After briefly staying with a friend, Janipher and her two children were forced back on to the street where the police found them. Her children were sent to hospital and she was arrested and later transferred to Yarl's Wood Immigration and Removal Centre. During the first two weeks, Janipher had no news of her children and was in immense pain through not being able to breastfeed. At this time, she was informed that she would be deported to Uganda and feared a permanent separation from her children. After the Black Women Against Rape Action Project launched an appeal, her children were returned to her and lawyers have since been assigned to help stop the removal. Janipher states: "Yarl's Wood is a real prison. There is a lot of racism and intimidation from the staff... It's a horrible place for kids. The food is awful. It is the same every day.... I saw a lot of people suffering. I personally knew one woman who had tried to commit suicide and I heard of other women who wanted to take their own lives out of desperation. While I was there, we went on hunger strike in protest against the conditions".

Janipher is currently in a one bedroom flat and awaiting the outcome of a new asylum claim.

For full article see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/family/story/0,,215967,00.html>

Deportation halted for suicidal teenager

The Independent reports that the deportation of a 14-year-old girl and her mother was suspended on medical grounds. The mental health of the girl had significantly deteriorated after being in detention at Yarl's Wood for three months. Whilst in detention, she had begun self-

harming and had formed a suicide pact with a fellow detainee. The teenager along with her mother, were due to be deported to Germany where their original asylum application was refused six years ago. The girl has stated that she fears there is 'no way out' and she will eventually be deported to Turkey. Since being in the UK for six years, she has regularly attended school, now speaks fluent English and has established a close network of friends.

A spokesperson for the Children's Commissioner Sir Albert Aynsley-Green, who visited the girl said "we do have concerns about detention when it comes to the length of stay for families seeking asylum. We realise these can bring up many emotional issues particularly for young people, and we are listening to children."

Liam Byrne, Immigration Minister stated that "we will not tolerate illegal migrants disrupting deportation from Britain and will take every step necessary, in the taxpayer's interest, to enforce returns of those with no right to be here."

For full article see:

http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/article3187116.ece

Women trafficked to UK could get compensation

The UK government has compensated four women who were trafficked into the UK and suffered 'sustained sexual abuse.'

The landmark legal case is based on a new interpretation of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority guidelines. Another 10,000 women are estimated to be eligible under the new interpretation. The compensation received was to officially recognise the 'pain and trauma' caused to the women.

Of the four women, two were minors when they were trafficked into the UK. All women were held as prisoners for over three years and "subject to forced prostitution, multiple rapes and beatings." The women were given no money and threatened by their captors

that they would be killed if they escaped. Compensation granted ranged between £62,000 and £16,500. Sarah Johnson of Lovells, a London Law firm who represented some of the women said: 'this will serve as a precedent for other cases and we are delighted.'

Julie Barton, of the Poppy Project welcomes the latest news and states: "previously, women have received no financial support for them to start afresh or to address the terrible circumstances they have had to endure. Often they are forced to return vulnerable and traumatised to their home country without any support"

This new development also comes amid emerging evidence that victims of trafficking for sexual purposes are getting younger as UK paedophile rings are smuggling young girls into the UK on demand.

For full article see:

http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,2228263,00.html

UK conferences

Tackling demand for human trafficking

CHASTE

24th January 2008

101 Queen Victoria Street, London

This conference hosted by CHASTE aims to examine issues around the demand for human trafficking. Discussions will cover current legislation in Sweden on prostitution, ways to enhance international collaboration and proposed solutions.

The conference will include the following key international speakers: Sven Gunnar-Liden (Swedish Baptist Union); Lars Back (Baltic Fern); Grainne Healy (European Women's Lobby); Dr Laura J Lederer (Senior Advisor on the Trafficking of Persons to the US State) and Liz Kelly (London Metropolitan University, CWASU).

For further information contact

Sally Richmond: Sally@chaste.org.uk

Tel: 0845 456 9335

www.chaste.org.uk

Conference registration £95

Hidden children, blatant crime: Identifying trafficked children

Barnardo's

20th February 2008

Pall Mall, London

This conference is aimed at children's services professionals, law enforcement agencies and policymakers to help provide essential strategies for identifying trafficked children.

Key speakers include representatives from: Ecpat UK; NSPCC (National Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line); The Unaccompanied Minors Team (London Borough of Haringey); The Home Office; UK Human Trafficking Centre and the Metropolitan Police

The conference costs:

£195+VAT (voluntary sector)

£295+ VAT (local authorities and public sector agencies)

For further information see:

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/conferences?utm_source=society&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=childtrafficking

or telephone: 020 7839 1233

International News

Iraq: Violence against women

Maj-Gen Abdul Jalil Khalaf, the Chief of Police in Basra has reported a campaign of violence and repression against women in Basra. He comments that religious extremists are deliberately targeting women who have now become too afraid to leave their homes without strict Islamic attire. These messages are also reinforced on the

walls with graffiti saying women must "cover their heads or be punished". Regular threats and intimidation targeted at women, often lead to murder. Between July and September 2007, forty-two women were killed. This includes a woman and her son who was shot due to rumours that her son was born from an adulterous relationship. A female lawyer who has also been threatened for working and not being at home, told the BBC that "attacks on women in the city were occurring every two or three days." Most crimes against women do not get reported to the police for fear of reprisal and a belief that the police are too scared and cannot solve the crimes.

For full article see:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7095209.stm

Russia: Domestic violence

Amnesty International report that in Russia, a woman dies every hour from domestic violence. During 2006, 15,000 criminal cases were brought against men for violence against their partners. Campaigners however, believe that the situation is far greater as violence against women is often considered 'normal' and many women do not report it. For this article the BBC interviewed three women and charts their experiences of domestic violence in Russia. Two of the women recount how they were hospitalised by the violence from their husband and discuss difficulties accessing support and reporting the incidents. One woman was raped by her husband in front of her children and has subsequently lost contact with her children due to her trauma.

For full article see:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7113099.stm>

Also see Amnesty International's report: '*Russian Federation: Nowhere to turn-violence against women in the family*' (2005) <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR460562005?open&of=ENG-RUS>

Sierra Leone: Domestic violence continues post war

IRIN state that violence against women continues in post war Sierra Leone, despite recent legislation to improve the legal status of women. Although more women are reporting incidents of domestic violence and rape, perpetrators usually go unpunished largely due to lack of resources and attitudes in support of men. Musu, a 23-year-old woman was regularly beaten and raped by her husband. She was shunned by the community when she reported her situation and states that "whenever you talk to the chief he will say 'the man is always right...that's the custom'." Jamesina King, Sierra Leone's Human Rights Commission (HRC) states that the HRC "was recently in the north to educate communities about violence against women, and members found that many people are still unaware of women's rights or disregard their grievances." Even in incidents where violence and sexual assault are acknowledged, a local chief will usually encourage 'mediation' on what is considered a 'family dispute.' Amnesty International state that "mediation in rape cases contributes to impunity and facilitates state evasion of the obligation to ensure that violence against women is prosecuted."

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75511>

Tanzania: Woman beaten for having HIV test

A woman from Makete Tanzania, was recently beaten and hospitalised by her husband after going for a HIV/AIDS test. The free HIV tests are part a national programme encouraged by President Jakaya Kikwete. Women's rights campaigners report this incident was "uncalled for" and women do not need permission to get a HIV test.

Statistics reveal that half of the 1.6 million people living with HIV in Tanzania are women. Women's rights campaigner, Jostina Katunzi believes women in Tanzania

are worried about their health and should adhere to calls to go for tests. She states that women in Tanzania are free to go for a test without consulting their husbands. John Ngahyoma from the BBC in Dar es Salaam also claims that the Makete area is one of the worst-HIV-affected regions in Tanzania.

Following this, Taj Liundi the head of Tanzania's Commission for Aids has advised married couples to consult each other and has confirmed, "we shall intensify our efforts to raise awareness of the importance of going for a test."

For full article see:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7117184.stm>

Niger: Women report rape and violence as "normal"

Oxfam have recently conducted a survey that reveals 70 per cent of women in parts of Niger believe being beaten, humiliated and raped by their husband, father or brothers is 'normal'. Lisette Quesnel from Oxfam states, "women here have been indoctrinated by their families, religious officials, by society that this is a normal phenomenon." Reinforcing these views are the social acceptability in which the crimes take place and the impunity given to male perpetrators of violence against female relatives. Quesnel continues "if a woman goes to the police, they will tell her she must have been a bad woman and ask her what she did to deserve it." Violence and rape against women especially by husbands and family members is considered taboo. Women also fear being made destitute through their husband divorcing them. In courts, a polygamous husband can divorce and evict his wife at any time and during this process the Judge will not hear 'one word' from the wife.

A small number of centres have been established in Niger for abused women however, most women stay away for fear of being seen. Human rights activists state "Niger's male-dominated government shields away from anything more than tokenism when it comes to women's rights".

Currently Niger has one of the highest unemployment rates for women with fewer than 7 per cent of women in official income generating activities.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75720>

Saudi Arabia: Woman raped and punished

There was widespread international condemnation in November 2007, after courts in Saudi Arabia increased the sentence of lashings to a woman who was gang raped and spoke out about the injustice. The woman was sentenced to six months imprisonment and 200 lashes. Her lawyer was also banned from the case and had his professional licence confiscated.

The case involves a woman and a male acquaintance who were attacked and raped by seven men. The Saudi Justice Officials stated the woman was having an extramarital affair with the male acquaintance, which is 'forbidden'. The men have since been charged with kidnapping but not rape, as the Judge believed this could not be 'proved.' A mobile phone recording of the attack was ignored as evidence.

Farida Deif From Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Division stated "this verdict not only sends victims of sexual violence the message that they should not press charges, but in effect offers protection and impunity to the perpetrators." She continues, "Victims of sexual violence in Saudi Arabia face enormous obstacles in the criminal justice system... their interrogations and court hearings are more likely to compound the trauma of the original assault than provide justice."

In December 2007 King Abdullah pardoned the woman. The Saudi justice minister, Abdullah bin Muhammed al-Sheikh stated "The king always looks into alleviating the suffering of the citizens when he becomes sure that these verdicts will leave psychological effects on the convicted people, though he is convinced and sure that

the verdicts were fair."

For further information see:

<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/11/16/saudia17363.htm>

Brazil: Woman gang raped in Police cell

Julia Carepa, the Governor for the State of Para, Brazil has confirmed an inquiry is underway to investigate why a woman was detained in a police cell with over twenty men for a month and repeatedly sexually abused. Initial reports suggest that the woman was arrested on suspicion of theft, however no formal charge appears to have been made. Whilst detained in the police cell, the woman was repeatedly raped and forced to have sex with men for food. There is also controversy surrounding the age of the woman, some reports believe she was 15 years old, others state 20 years old. Carepa states that regardless of age, "a woman should never be left in jail with men." Women's Rights Groups in Brazil argue this is not an isolated incident and are aware of other controversies relating to women being detained with men.

For full article see:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7108676.stm>

Iran: Forced into prostitution by family members

The BBC reports as part of its Crossing Continents programme, how some women and girls in Iran are sold into prostitution by their family members and often subsequently punished by the justice system. The programme covers the story of Leila who was sold into prostitution by her mother from the age of nine and became the main income provider for her family. Leila's lawyer Ms Shadi Sadr says that "a girl is considered one of the first commodities or properties that can be traded or sold in the eyes of a parent who is poor in Iran." As a teenager, Leila was sold into a several 'temporary marriages,' whereby men bought her for several weeks or months at a time. One 'temporary husband' of two months made her have sex with as many as 15 men

a night for his own profit. After the police raided the property, the 'husband' was charged with 'running a house with illegal sex' and sentenced to five years imprisonment. Leila was also arrested for prostitution and told that as she did not try to escape and inform authorities of her situation, she had therefore consented to prostitution. The trial also revealed that Leila's brother had raped her, for which crime he was sentenced to 99 lashes and Leila was given the death penalty for incest. Although the brother later retracted the confessions and had his sentence repealed, Leila sentence still stood. It was at this point her lawyer appealed and eventually won to revoke the sentence. Ms Sadr says "the judicial system is deeply conservative and unfair...these male judges have not had any training about sexual charges. They all have a chauvinistic point of view and they see the woman as guilty."

For full article about the Crossing Continents Programme see:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/crossing_continents/7107379.stm

Nigeria: Increase in child rape

IRIN reports that young girls are increasingly victims of, or vulnerable to, child rape in Kano, northern Nigeria. The police and government officials state that the recent upsurge in child rape means young girls are not safe in the city. Kano's deputy police chief states "child rape is becoming so rampant in Kano and we are worried that if nothing is done to stop the problem it will get out of hand." Recent reported crimes include a series of gang rapes and a seventy-year-old man raping a three-year-old girl. Moreover, Aminuddeen Abubakar, an Islamic scholar also states "I know of a particular case in which the victim was raped to death." Abubakar believes several factors are contributing to this upsurge including the belief that raping a young girl will cure men of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. The police also face difficulties prosecuting men, as even when there is evidence to ensure a conviction, many families of the young girl are unwilling to press charges due to social stigma placed upon the girl.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76087>

Nepal: Women targeted over alleged witchcraft

IRIN report that women continue to be accused of witchcraft in Nepal and are subjected to abuse, violence and abandonment. The article outlines the situation of a woman who is undergoing medical treatment after a violent attack from her family who accused her of using 'black magic'. Women's rights activist Bandana Rana said "we are still shocked to find incidence of women being subject to the worst forms of violence – both physical and mental – at the hands of their families and local communities." She argues that some people are also using witchcraft as a means to victimise females, especially widows and deprive them of property. Human rights activist Samijha Shrestha, believes that currently the government has not addressed the issues around witchcraft. She states, "We still don't have any laws to apply harsh punishment to those who torture women in their witch-hunt." The Ministry of Women in Nepal assert there is insufficient evidence, however women's rights groups believe women fearing further torture do not report it.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75311>

Iraq: Honour Killings in Kurdish north

IRIN state that 'honour based crimes' in semi autonomous Kurdistan, northern Iraq are continuing. In the last four months at least 27 Iraqi Kurdish women have been murdered for 'illicit affairs' and 97 women have tried to commit suicide. Kurdistan's Human Rights ministry state that women who commit suicide by setting themselves on fire have increased in recent years. In 2005 there were 36 cases of self-immolation and in 2006 there were 133 incidents. According to the Kurdish Regional Government statistics, self-immolation and

the murder of women continued to rise in 2007. The statistics reveal the continuation of violence against women despite recent awareness raising campaigns and education programmes. Alongside the need for Kurdish officials to actively condemn the practice, the UN has urged the judiciary to be forceful in its message that killing women is not tolerated.

For full article see:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75714>

International Conferences

The Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking UN.GIFT 13 - 15 February 2008 Vienna, Austria

The United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) aims to mobilise state and non-state players to eradicate human trafficking.

The Vienna Forum aims to raise awareness and facilitate cooperation and partnerships among various stakeholders. The Forum will address the following key issues:

- Vulnerability: why does human trafficking happen;
- Impact: human and social consequences of human trafficking;
- Action: innovative approaches to solving complex problems.

Attendees will include representatives from Member States, UN agencies, academics, NGOs and other civil society representatives. The Forum will include plenary sessions, panel discussions and workshops.

For further information and applicability of UN.GIFT funding criteria contact:

United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, c/o United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, PO Box 500, 1400 Vienna, Austria
Telephone: (+43-1) 26060-0

Or visit:

<http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=15850>

New Publication - UK

A Statistical Study to Estimate the Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales - Summary Report

Efua Dorkenoo, Linda Morison and Alison Macfarlane

**Forward
2007**

This research project commissioned by the Department of Health in collaboration with London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Department of Midwifery, City University reveals that nearly 66,000 women in England and Wales have experienced FGM. The statistics also indicate that a further 20,000 women and girls are at high risk of being subjected to FGM.

The research outlines key issues, reasons and evidence available on the practice of FGM. Maps of key prevalence countries and associated FGM types (I,II,III) along with regional breakdowns across England and Wales are also included.

The research demonstrates the need to provide and enhance health care and support services for women who have experienced FGM and are living in the UK. In addition, action is needed to help identify and protect girls at risk of FGM. The research recommends greater collaboration between statutory agencies, NGOs and communities to work to 'end FGM within a generation.'

For full research report see:

<http://www.forwarduk.org.uk/key-issues/fgm/research>

New Publications – International

Doubly Traumatized: Lack of access to justice for female victims of sexual and gender based violence in northern Uganda

Amnesty International

AI Index: AFR 59/005/2007

Amnesty International research reveals sexual abuse and violence against women and girls in northern Uganda is "endemic." The research, conducted in five districts in northern Uganda during August 2007, outlines how many women have been subjected to sexual and gender based violence by state and non-state actors, family and community members. The report highlights that the 21 years of conflict with the Lords Resistance Army has exacerbated the risks and incidence of women being subjected to violence in the region. In addition, women and girls in the Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps (where most people live in the region) are still vulnerable to attacks and abuse despite the recent cessation of hostilities.

The research also raises concerns over the lack of support women and girls receive after being raped, assaulted and/or physically abused. The report indicates that women rarely report any attack, partly due to inaccessibility of police, lack of trained staff and prevalent discriminatory attitudes including views that marital rape is not a crime. In addition, women are deterred from reporting gender-based violence because of existing police processes. This includes police bribing women and charging them to investigate allegations and the requirement to provide medical proof that often re-traumatizes women.

Amnesty International recommends greater: legislative frameworks, data collection mechanisms, court processes and public understanding and awareness.

For full research report see:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR590052007>

Hidden in the Mealie Meal: Gender abuse and women's HIV treatment in Zambia

Human Rights Watch

December 2007

Volume 19 No 18(A)

This research explores how gender related abuse and violence impacts on women's access to antiretroviral therapy in Zambia. The report charts how women continue to experience discrimination including insecure property rights and consequently are forced into poverty and aggressive relationships. Women's experience and/or fear of violence leaves many too afraid to tell their husband or family of their HIV status and unable to access necessary health care and support. Currently in Zambia, a divorced or widowed woman is frequently left with no property or land due to customary laws.

The research includes interviews with women who are living with HIV, healthcare professionals, counsellors and government officials. The report criticises the government's failure to fully implement international guidelines to stop violence and discrimination against women. It states that at present, the health care system does not address gender-based violence and recommends a series of interventions to protect women and ensure they access vital treatment.

For full research report see:

<http://hrw.org/reports/2007/zambia1207/zambia1207web.pdf>

International Protection for Trafficked Persons and Those who Fear Being Trafficked

Kaori Saito

UNHCR

Research Paper No 149, December 2007

This research examines asylum application by people who have been trafficked and applied for asylum in four countries: Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. The research reveals both inconsistencies within case law and diversion from the UNHCR Trafficking guidelines.

The paper discusses the international law, definitions and availability of protection relating to the trafficking of persons. The research analyses: the interpretation of trafficking within case law; trafficking as persecution; re-trafficking; reliance on country reports; trauma and discrimination; agents of persecution; state protection and the position of trafficking within the 1951 Refugee Convention grounds.

The research revealed that of the four countries, the UK was least likely to be convinced that a person who has been trafficked needs international protection. In addition, the UK was considered the most inflexible in relation to its interpretation of trafficking within the 1951 Refugee Convention. The UK was also the only country that believed appellants were not at risk of further trafficking if their age fell outside of age ranges quoted in country of origin reports.

For full research report see:

<http://www.unhcr.org/research/RESEARCH/476652742.pdf>

Distilling Elements of Good Practice: The action programme against trafficking in minors for sexual purposes - Costa Rica, Thailand and Ukraine

Ecpat International 2007

The aim of this research is to reduce incidence of child trafficking for sexual purposes. This publication specifically focuses on three case-study countries, Costa Rica, Thailand and Ukraine. The three countries selected all represent origin, transit and destination countries with sub-regional and internal trafficking issues. The research reveals a high local demand in all countries is fuelling the trafficking of children. Alongside this, there is an increase in the production, accessibility and distribution of child abuse imagery and child sex tourism in the countries.

Each country specific section includes background and contextual information, a brief description of services, awareness raising programmes and achievements. Each section concludes with areas of good practice including policy and practical recommendations.

This research is aimed at practitioners working on international child trafficking issues and draws on a range of action-programme methodologies.

For full report see:

<http://www.ecpat.net/eng/pdf/Trafficking%20Action%20Programme.pdf>

Global Eye on Human Trafficking - Bulletin on news, information and analysis on trafficking of persons

Issue 1 December 2007

International Organisation for Migration

The bulletin covers a range of issues affecting persons who have been trafficked. Key articles include *80-year-old woman Trafficked to Russia*, *Porto Recommendation on Trafficking for Labour Exploitation* and *Unpacking South Africa's new Children's Act*. The bulletin also discusses key UN initiatives launched to fight human trafficking

For full bulletin see:

http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/projects/show_case_pdf/global_eye_first_issue.pdf

Forced Marriage of the Girl Child

UN Commission on the Status of Women

December 2007

E/CN.6.2008/4

This report examines a series of measures agreed by the UN Commission on the Status of Women. These measures are aimed to both prevent the forced marriage of girls and ensure relevant support is provided to girls who are in such marriages.

The research covers background information regarding issues of forced marriage for children. The findings reveal a continuation of forced marriage in many countries and in different contexts, including the recruitment of 'bush wives,' who are abducted and forced into marriage during armed conflicts. Legislative frameworks and implementation, prevention strategies and UN interventions are analysed within the report. A series of recommendations for future actions is also included.

For full research report see:

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=&docid=478494062>

women's asylum news

Produced by RWRP (for more information on this issue, please contact: Claire Bennett)
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