

**Title:** Refugee Women Project 2008-2009

**Date:** 2008-2009

**Unit:** Forced Migration and Human Rights

**Core Staff:** Alice Edwards

**Research Assistants:** Monica Esposito (2008) Claire Balding, Lydia Geny, Laura O'Donnell, Emily Soothill (2009)

## **Project Summary**

The Refugee Women Project was an ongoing priority project of the Forced Migration and Human Rights Unit. With the twentieth anniversary of the UNHCR's first policy on refugee women in 2010, the project explored the development and emergence of specific policies on refugee and other displaced women and their implementation at the field level, in order to explore new methodologies and theories about gender, human rights, and refugee women. It was also interested in the role and impact of international human rights standards relating to women within the displacement and statelessness contexts.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this project were to develop a body of research around the rights of refugee women and girls, which in turn would inform the development of policy and practice in the area.

## **Activities**

As part of the broader Refugee Women Project, Alice Edwards, former head of the Forced Migration and Human Rights Unit, secured an Arthur C. Helton Fellowship of the American Society of International Law to contribute to the project. Together with start-up funding from the HRLC, she undertook a three-week field visit to Uganda in July 2008, investigating field implementation of 'gender mainstreaming' approaches to the rights of refugee women. The field visit involved meetings and interviews with the government, relevant UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, and refugee women's groups living in Nakivale Refugee Camp, south-west Uganda; and reporting on the same to the various interlocutors.

This research also fed into the preparation and presentation of a background paper for a joint high level seminar between the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and (UNHCR) and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), held at the United Nations in New York in July 2009. Alice Edwards secured a consultancy contract with the UNHCR to act as their expert for the seminar. The executive summary of the paper is available on the HRLC website, while the full background paper 'Displacement, Statelessness and Questions of Gender Equality under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' is available on REF WORLD. The paper explores the application of the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) to

displaced and stateless women and girls, with a view to enhancing the international legal protection framework.

### **Outputs**

The Executive Summary of the background paper is available on the HRLC website in the 'Conference Publications and Training Materials' section and via the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org).

The final version of the background paper entitled 'Displacement, Statelessness and Questions of Gender Equality under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' is available on REFWORLD at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a8aa8bd2.html>.