



# Working Women at Risk: The Links Between Making a Living and Sexual Violence for Refugees in Ethiopia

Women's Refugee Commission  
Field Mission to Ethiopia

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## Executive Summary

It is widely believed that economic opportunities can provide women with life options, greater participation in decision-making and more equity within the household. As a result, they are assumed to protect women against gender-based violence, including sexual assault and exploitation and domestic violence.

The Women's Refugee Commission\* (the Commission) traveled to Ethiopia to learn whether this assumption held true for refugees from Somalia and Eritrea. The Commission found that refugee women generally provide for themselves and their families in three ways: participating in income generating activities within the camp; selling goods and/or working in domestic labor outside of the camp; and collecting and selling firewood. Women's attempts to make a living can put them at greater risk for gender-based violence, including domestic violence, attacks while collecting firewood and harassment by employers if they are engaged in domestic work. In addition, income generating activities sponsored by aid agencies do not significantly contribute to increased income for refugee women. Finally, refugee women do not often participate in training programs that will prepare them for opportunities to earn a living if they are resettled to the United States or elsewhere.

### Key Findings

- ▶ Without access to markets and real economic opportunities, women's livelihood strategies can put them at greater risk for gender-based violence.
- ▶ Most current income generating programs sponsored by aid agencies do not significantly increase the income of refugee women.
- ▶ The provision of clean cook stoves has significantly reduced a woman's risk of gender-based violence by reducing the need to leave the camps to collect firewood for personal use. However, refugee women who continue to collect firewood do so predominantly to sell, and continue to face great risk of sexual assault as a result.

### Key Recommendations

- ▶ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), its donors and implementing agencies must improve livelihoods programming by conducting more market analysis and designing programs that actually link refugee women to viable markets and increase income.
- ▶ UNHCR, its donors and implementing agencies must continue to include and expand the participation of host community members in livelihoods activities in order to decrease tension over natural resources and expand access to economic opportunities that may lead to a decrease in risk of gender-based violence for

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refugee women.

- ▶ UNHCR and its donors should continue to support gender-based violence “coffee talk” discussion groups, as well as other awareness raising campaigns that appear to be addressing the underlying norms that condone violence against women.
- ▶ The Ethiopian government, UNHCR and its donors must provide more support for the distribution of clean cook stoves and ethanol fuel.

## Why We Went

The Women’s Refugee Commission is undertaking a three-year research project on the livelihood strategies of displaced women and youth. The project looks specifically at economic coping mechanisms during displacement and the protection issues related to those strategies. The project includes field assessments in 10 countries. The Commission is reviewing and assessing interventions and programs implemented by the humanitarian community to support displaced women and youth to see whether or not they successfully lead to improved economic opportunity and/or address identified protection issues linked to economic need. The goal of the research is to enhance the well-being of displaced women and youth by promoting comprehensive, sustainable livelihoods that meet real market demands and lead to increased self-reliance.

A sub-section of the livelihoods project focuses on the nexus between women’s livelihood strategies and their vulnerability to gender-based violence in three refugee settings: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Cairo, Egypt; and the Somali and Tigray regions of Ethiopia. The Commission selected Cairo and Kuala Lumpur to look at the complexities of serving refugees in urban settings, and three refugee camps in Ethiopia to assess the challenges of achieving self-reliance in protracted camp settings with highly restrictive market opportunities. In all sites, the Commission sought to understand how the differing contexts impact women’s survival strategies and their risk of gender-based violence.

This report details our findings in Ethiopia. The Malaysia and Cairo reports on livelihoods and gender-based violence can be found at [www.womenscommission.org/resources](http://www.womenscommission.org/resources).

The Women’s Refugee Commission traveled to Ethiopia from September 21 to October 4, 2008 to visit the Somali region (two camps: Kebri Beyah and Aw Barre) and the Tigray region (Shimelba camp). The Commission conducted focus groups with 71 refugee women<sup>1</sup> and met with the primary service-providing organizations in all three camps: UNHCR and the Ethiopian government agency, the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), which oversees health, security and food aid distribution in the camps. The aim of the field mission was to collect information on the current livelihoods strategies of refugee women; identify promising practices among livelihoods programs that increase women’s economic opportunities; and shape a set of recommendations for practitioners, policy makers and donors on how to improve livelihoods opportunities for refugee women in Ethiopia in ways that could also mitigate their vulnerability to gender-based violence.

## Country Background

Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa and one of the oldest in the world.<sup>2</sup> Bordered by Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Sudan, it hosts refugees from throughout the Horn of Africa. UNHCR estimates that 85,183<sup>3</sup> refugees are living in Ethiopia, primarily from Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. Ethiopia, which has 77



million citizens,<sup>4</sup> is an extremely poor country, with a per capita income of US \$130<sup>5</sup>; an estimated 30 million Ethiopians live in absolute poverty (the absence of enough resources to secure basic life necessities).<sup>6</sup> Ethiopia has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world.<sup>7</sup> Agriculture is the dominant sector, with coffee the largest export.<sup>8</sup> A heavy reliance on rain-fed crops, coupled with frequent droughts, leads to periodic, large-scale famine. High population density, conflict with both neighboring Somalia and Eritrea, deforestation and soil degradation have led to further disruption of livelihood strategies. The Ethiopian Government has interpreted the 1951 Convention on Refugees restrictively and does not allow for the formal employment of refugees. These challenges present great barriers to self-reliance.

### The Somali Region

Somalis have been fleeing instability for two decades. Years of anarchy since the fall of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991, combined with frequent drought and rampant inflation, have turned Somalia into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.<sup>9</sup> By the end of April 2008, UNHCR had registered 26,721 Somali refugees in Ethiopia.<sup>10</sup> There are three refugee camps in the Somali region: Kebri Beyah, Aw Barre and Sheder. The Women's Refugee Commission traveled to both Kebri Beyah and Aw Barre camps to conduct focus groups, visit project sites and interview practitioners. Due to time constraints, the Commission did not visit Sheder, the newest camp in the region.

Kebri Beyah is located approximately 70km from the Somali border<sup>11</sup> and hosts approximately 16,000 refugees.<sup>12</sup> Of the women interviewed in focus groups, many had been there for 10 or more years, some for the entire 17 years since the establishment of the camp in 1991. Aw Barre is a newer camp in eastern Ethiopia, opened in July 2007 to receive a new influx of Somali refugees, primarily from Mogadishu. As of April 2008, it hosted some 10,000 new arrivals.<sup>13</sup> Due to Aw Barre's isolated location, access to work or markets outside of the camp is more limited. In Kebri Beyah, there is much more interaction with the local population and markets.<sup>14</sup> Over all, the level of access one has to the outside market greatly impacts livelihoods strategies of refugees in this region.

### The Tigray Region

Several years after Ethiopia and Eritrea ended a conflict that killed more than 70,000 people and displaced 1.4 million, the two countries continue to disagree over the demarcation of their shared border. Eritrean refugees first crossed into Ethiopia soon after the end of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict in May 2000. In 2008, UNHCR recorded 22,385 registered Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia.<sup>15</sup> Today, refugees from Eritrea are fleeing forced conscription and human rights abuses.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of 2007, Shimelba camp was home to 18,681 refugees.<sup>17</sup> The camp is largely made up of two major ethnic groups, the Tigrinyas and the Kunamas. Kunamas represent approximately 38 percent of the population; Tigrinyas represent approximately 50 percent of the population; and the remaining 12 percent are made up of ethnic groups, such as the Saho and others.<sup>18</sup> The camp is very divided, due to the marked differences between the Tigrinya and Kunama ethnic groups. The Tigrinyas are largely urban people from Asmara, the capital city, many of whom have received secondary and tertiary educations. The percentage of females (23 percent)<sup>19</sup> on the Tigrinya side is lower than in most camp settings due to the high numbers of young Tigrinya male refugees fleeing forced conscription. The Kunama population comes largely from rural

areas. Kunamas did not have the same access to education and professional training as other groups, and were highly discriminated against in Eritrea.

Due to its proximity to the border with Eritrea, there are concerns for refugee protection in the event of another war, and a second camp has been established farther from the border as a contingency plan. Ethiopian national security interests restrict movement in and out of the camp.<sup>20</sup>

## What We Found

### ▶ Women's strategies to make a living can put them at greater risk for gender-based violence

The three camps the Commission visited have very different in-camp economies and differing access to outside markets. Generally speaking, refugee women living in camps bordering towns have many more livelihood options than those who live in isolated camps far from markets or host populations. This is highly dependent, however, on the restrictions placed on refugee movement. When refugees' movement outside of the camp is highly restricted, such as at Shimelba camp, close proximity of a town does not necessarily provide increased economic opportunities. Residents of Shimelba camp cannot leave the premises without



Access to local markets increases women's livelihoods opportunities.

permission from ARRA, the Ethiopian government agency providing security for the camp. This greatly restricts a refugee's ability to interact with the local economy. Refugees in Kebri Beyah, however, do not have tight restrictions on movement and regularly interact with the local market.

Refugee women generally provide for themselves and their families in three ways: participating in income generating activities within the camp, including being supported by aid agencies; selling goods and/or working in domestic labor outside of the camp; and collecting and selling firewood. Exposure to gender-based violence as a result of livelihood activities was widely reported in every discussion group with refugee women. The types of gender-based violence women described fell into the categories described below.

### *Domestic violence*

*"If we start income generating activities and get money, my husband will ask me for the money and if I say no, he will beat me."<sup>21</sup>*

Violence as a result of conflict between husbands and wives over control of household resources was the most commonly reported form of gender-based violence refugee women mentioned when discussing the risks involved with their livelihoods activities. They reported that they often do not have control over the income they earn.

One woman reported selling two of the highly valued plastic sheets (for use in constructing dwellings) in the market for 180 birr (approximately USD \$16.74) to buy clothes for her children for Ramadan. When she returned home with the new clothing, her husband beat her. He wanted the money to buy khat, a local shrub whose leaves, when chewed, provide a stimulating effect.<sup>22</sup>

## What Works

*“Previously men beat us and we didn't report. Now we know more and report thanks to IRC coffee talks.”<sup>24</sup>*

**Community-based discussion group programs to reduce gender-based violence appear to positively impact the reporting of incidents of violence and challenge some of the norms condoning violence against women.**

The International Rescue Committee oversees gender-based violence services in all three camps. This includes overseeing the referral systems for reporting gender-based violence, conducting community outreach initiatives, public education campaigns and social services for survivors.

Coffee/tea discussions are conducted on a weekly basis in all three camps to discuss topics such as domestic violence, early marriage, women's education, female genital mutilation and other topics in an effort to challenge cultural norms that condone some forms of gender-based violence. The groups are formed by the refugees and usually involve neighbors and extended family members. Sixty percent of the participants in the coffee discussions in Shimelba camp are men.<sup>23</sup> Discussions occur at the homes of the participants and are facilitated by a gender-based violence outreach worker. Coffee discussion group participants report feeling more informed and empowered.



Coffee discussions give women and men an opportunity to discuss topics such as domestic violence, early marriage and women's education.

## Attacks while collecting firewood

*“We went to collect firewood and were chased by three men. I was thin and ran but my other friend was bigger and couldn't run. The three men caught her and raped her. She escaped but ultimately died.”<sup>25</sup>*

Camp residents in all three sites use firewood, charcoal or “clean cook” stoves to cook their food. As charcoal is more expensive than firewood and ethanol-burning stoves have not been widely distributed, firewood continues to be in demand. Therefore, selling firewood continues to be a livelihood strategy for many refugee women. The depletion of trees in the areas surrounding the camps has increased competition over scarce resources between refugees and the local population, which also relies heavily on firewood. Women in all three sites report harassment from the local population in the form of verbal, physical and sexual attacks while collecting firewood.

The collection and sale of firewood appears to be particularly common for those in great need. For example, one single female head of household reported sending her young daughters out to collect firewood to sell as she was not in the physical condition to do so. She felt she had no other opportunity to earn an income. As the distances walked by women are very long and increase over time due to the depletion of trees, the risk of attack while collecting firewood remains great.

Women in Aw Barre reported that they continue to collect firewood both for personal use and to sell to others. Women report having to walk great distances to collect the wood<sup>26</sup> and said that local community members extort money from refugees in exchange for access to areas with firewood.<sup>27</sup> Women make about 10 birr (about US 90 cents) for one bundle of wood.<sup>28</sup> Firewood is becoming increasingly difficult to collect<sup>29</sup>

as nearby resources are becoming depleted and women must walk farther and farther to collect it. Women report great fear of attack by locals while out collecting the firewood.

Similarly, at the Shimelba camp, Kunama women collect firewood for cooking as well as to sell.<sup>30</sup> Kunama men often accompany women while collecting firewood in order to protect the women from being raped.<sup>31</sup> Despite this, risk of attack is high.

*“When we go to collect firewood, the locals try to beat us and rape us. Even the men get beat.”<sup>32</sup>*

## What Works

### **Clean cook stoves and ethanol distribution in Kebri Beyah significantly decrease a woman’s need to collect firewood.**

In 2005, a report was released<sup>33</sup> exposing the heavy dependence of refugee women in Kebri Beyah on firewood collection, both to procure fuel for cooking and to sell for a small profit as part of their livelihood. The camp’s protection officer stated in the report that women spend 6 to 10 hours collecting firewood in a single outing. Rape and physical abuse of women and children by locals [while collecting firewood] was rampant.<sup>34</sup> The UNHCR Global Report 2007<sup>35</sup> has since noted that “90 per cent of households in the Kebri Beyah camp received cooking stoves and ethanol.” This has greatly reduced the need for firewood for personal use and many women whom the Commission interviewed reported that they no longer need to collect firewood to sell and now look for other forms of income generation.



Clean cook stoves that use ethanol reduce the need for women to collect firewood.

*“Before clean cook stoves, we had to travel about 4km to fetch wood and were attacked by local population.”<sup>36</sup>*

Far fewer households have received the clean cook stoves in Aw Barre. While distribution of the new stoves and fuel for those who have received them has greatly reduced dependency on firewood collection, users report inconsistent ethanol distribution. Without ethanol, the stoves are inoperable.

## *Harassment by employers while engaging in domestic work*

*“My girls complain they get beaten while doing domestic work and are often not paid but I have no other choice but to send them there.”<sup>37</sup>*

*“When we work, the owner of the house will ask for sex. If you say no, the man will not pay anything. If you say yes, the wife will beat you.”<sup>38</sup>*

Many women, particularly in the Kebri Beyah camp, report working as domestic workers in the local town and/or sending female children to work for families as live-in domestic workers. Women reported earning anywhere from 10-15 birr (approximately US \$0.93 - US \$1.40) per day for domestic labor.<sup>39</sup> Many report harassment and exploitation while working in local homes and have experienced the withholding of payment, physical abuse, sexual harassment and rape.<sup>40</sup> Over all, refugee women have very little recourse for reporting such incidents and feel they have little choice but to accept such positions despite the risks involved.

## *Sexual exploitation*

*“If [young women] have a job, at least they would have power and be able to choose who to live with and who is best for them.”<sup>41</sup>*

Refugee women in Shimelba voiced concern over the livelihood options of young single women in the camp.<sup>42</sup> Most young women stay with relatives for support and protection. Young women who do not have the opportunity to stay with relatives in the camp often opt to live with a man for support and physical protection. Young women who are living alone have very few livelihood options in the camp and often run out of food rations before the end of the month<sup>43</sup> as they are not pooling rations with other family members. Some refugees interviewed reported that young women living alone are so vulnerable, they will decide to live with a man if he promises to give her a change of clothing.<sup>44</sup> This strategy has resulted in unplanned pregnancies.<sup>45</sup> One woman explained that “men force women to have children so the women will not leave them. The women need the man’s help to raise the children.”<sup>46</sup>

Some refugee women are also involved in prostitution.<sup>47</sup> Coffee houses are sometimes the scene of commercial sexual transactions.<sup>48</sup> A practitioner explained that “some women engage in prostitution to supplement food rations.”<sup>49</sup>

### ▶ **Income generating activities do not significantly contribute to increased income for refugee women**

The Commission observed several varieties of aid agency-sponsored programs designed to increase economic opportunities for refugee women. Some seek to increase economic opportunity within the confines of the camp while others support refugee women so they can compete in markets outside the camp. Very few programs have successfully linked refugee women to sustainable, increased income.

## *Kebri Beyah: Relief substitution<sup>50</sup>*

Thirty refugee women in Kebri Beyah are participating in a small-scale relief substitution program in which they are trained and subsequently hired by an aid agency to produce school uniforms and sanitary napkins for the camp. This program, established in 2004, trains women in tailoring and embroidery for six months, and also provides semi-annual training in business management, conflict resolution and quality control. All materials and equipment are provided, and the women are paid per piece produced. Of the 30 women, 20 focus exclusively on school uniform production. Women are paid 22 birr (approximately US \$2) per uniform completed. The target minimum of total uniforms produced per year is 2,000. In 2008, 4,856 uniforms were produced. The remaining 10 women work exclusively on sanitary napkin production. In 2008, UNHCR elected to switch to disposable sanitary napkin distribution in response to refugee women’s reports that cloth napkins were not meeting their needs. Therefore, these 10 women will be reassigned to school uniform production. The impact this will have on income earned for all participants was not known at the time of the interview. Most participants in the relief substitution intervention reported spending their earnings on food and clothes. According to the program supervisor, women typically do not make enough to save.<sup>51</sup>

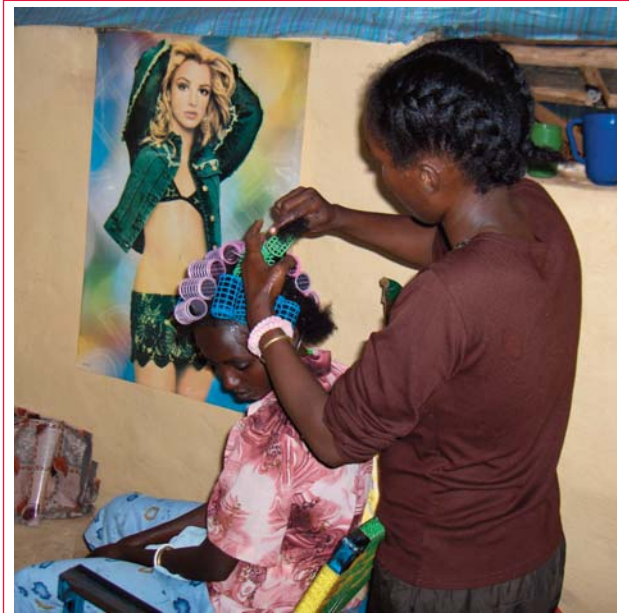
## *Shimelba: Small business in the camp market*

Many of the refugee women interviewed in Shimelba actively participate in the camp economy. Women operate small businesses, such as coffee shops, hairdressing, beauty shops, video show theaters and food stalls. Women also work in the bars, restaurants and coffee shops peppering the camp. Some better-established businesses in the market had refrigeration equipment, stereo equipment for playing music, electricity and other

modern conveniences. The most successful businesses tend to receive additional funding from remittances or other outside sources.<sup>52</sup> Those from the Tigrinya community appear to have more access to remittance monies and other outside resources than do the Kunama, Saho or other ethnic groups within the camp.

Aid agencies have attempted to help refugees with less access to resources participate in the camp economy by providing seed money, start-up grants and in-kind equipment donations to those who submit promising business proposals.<sup>53</sup> Factors considered in selecting promising businesses include viability of activities proposed, distribution of opportunities within the ethnic groups and market needs.<sup>54</sup> Businesses supported have included restaurants, cafes, an embroidery shop, video show theaters, a photography studio and an electric generator business. On the whole, these businesses have not been very profitable.<sup>55</sup>

One practitioner explained that while the market is vibrant, it still cannot support every business venture, especially those with only small amounts of start-up capital. For example, coffee houses and restaurants that can afford electricity and refrigerators can offer cool drinks and music, and can host a larger number of clients after dark.<sup>56</sup> Often participants in small business programs sponsored by aid agencies cannot compete in the restricted market without additional capital.<sup>57</sup>



Hairdressing is typical of the small businesses set up by women in local markets.

### *Kebri Beyah: Competing in the local market*

In Kebri Beyah, the line between where the camp ends and where the town begins is difficult to discern. The marketplace is located steps from the entrance of the camp and refugees regularly go there. Some of the aid organizations in Kebri Beyah have tried to support refugee-owned small businesses in the market by providing seed grants to groups of refugee women who submit promising business proposals.<sup>58</sup> Programs tend to give in-kind donations of equipment to the groups and provide some business training.<sup>59</sup> Businesses started through these programs have included a clothing shop, a beauty parlor, butter making, a grinding mill and a goat- and sheep-rearing business.<sup>60</sup> Of the handful of businesses started through these programs, very few have succeeded in becoming self-sufficient, profitable endeavors. Practitioners interviewed account for the lack of high levels of success in the interventions to breakdowns in group relations, lack of market demand and competition with child care and household responsibilities on the part of participating women.<sup>61</sup>



## What Works

### Aw Barre: Supporting a burgeoning camp economy

The Women's Refugee Commission observed one very promising intervention in Aw Barre camp that was designed to stimulate the growing in-camp market as well as increase refugee women's protection and presence as purveyors in the market.

An aid agency in Aw Barre<sup>62</sup> designed this intervention after observing women borrowing items such as sugar, cigarettes and tomatoes from local community members to sell inside the camp. Refugee women who did not make enough profit from their sales to pay back the "loan" faced intimidation, harassment and extortion as a consequence of not paying back the financial equivalent of the loaned items.<sup>63</sup>

*"I often borrow goods from outside and agree to pay them back when I sell them. If we can't pay them back, we have to give them our ration cards."<sup>64</sup>*

Borrowing from the outside community over time became increasingly difficult due to deteriorating relations between host and camp populations.<sup>65</sup>

In response, the aid agency designed an intervention to support the burgeoning camp economy in a safer, more profitable way. Practitioners established 20 small women's groups and gave them sufficient start-up capital to purchase vegetables or meats in Jijiga, the closest regional market where goods are well priced. One person from each group is assigned to do all of the purchasing for the group to minimize transportation costs. The vegetables and meats purchased in Jijiga are then resold within the camp in a small market setting. After two months of participating in the intervention, some groups reported that they were already earning profits. One participant interviewed said she could sell one sheep or goat per day, particularly during Ramadan.

The aid agency implementing the intervention recognized that household nutritional status was of great concern to many who might not be able to purchase goods in the market. Therefore, the agency simultaneously established a backyard gardening program for 188 women, including a small number of women from the local community. Including women from the local community was an important step toward defusing some of the tension between refugee and local community members. The agency provided women with the tools, training and seeds to start gardens on the small plots of land behind their homes. While the first crop of vegetables was not yet ready for harvest at the time of the site visit, women participants were hopeful. While the objective of the intervention is to improve household nutritional status, the aid agency expects that some participants will be able to sell or trade some of their produce as well.



188 women are participating in a backyard gardening project, growing vegetables for their families and to sell.

### ► Household nutritional status is a major concern

Food rations are not always sufficient to feed families and yet at the same time are often the only resource to which refugee women have access. A large majority of women interviewed in Aw Barre, Kebri Beyah and Shimelba camp reported selling food rations to other camp residents and even to the surrounding community as a primary livelihood strategy. Many women reported using the money they earned selling food rations to buy milk for their children<sup>66</sup> or fresh vegetables, or to purchase materials to make goods to sell. This strategy is of particular concern as food rations were consistently reported to be insufficient to meet household nutritional needs.

- ▶ **Refugee women do not often participate in training programs that will prepare them for livelihoods upon resettlement**

Refugees in Kebri Beyah are now being offered resettlement on an individual basis. Some 7,000 Somali refugees are expected to be resettled from Kebri Beyah over the next few years.<sup>67</sup> Refugees in Shimelba camp are also



Women participate in computer skills training classes in small numbers due to their household responsibilities.

eligible for resettlement regardless of ethnic group. Approximately 6,000 refugees from Shimelba are expected to be resettled to the United States in the next few years.<sup>68</sup> Despite the fact that large numbers of these camps' populations will be resettled relatively soon, there are very few training programs offered that prepare refugees for the economic opportunities that might be available to them after resettlement. Computer training and English classes are offered at Shimelba. However, the Commission found that women's participation is generally low. In the computer training course offered, female participation is less than 10 percent.<sup>69</sup> Practitioners claim it is harder for women to participate due to their household responsibilities.<sup>70</sup> Selection criteria could also create barriers to entry for women. Selection is based on English speaking skills, educational background and arrival time, giving priority to those who have been in the camp the longest.<sup>71</sup> Refugee women also attribute low levels of participation to husbands who do not allow their wives to participate in activities outside the home.<sup>72</sup>

## Recommendations

- ▶ **The Ethiopian government, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its donors must provide more support for the distribution of clean cook stoves and ethanol fuel.** In addition to the environmental benefits offered by more fuel-efficient stoves, they have proven to directly reduce the need to collect firewood for personal use and thereby have great potential to reduce incidents of gender-based violence that occur while collecting firewood outside the camps.
- ▶ **UNHCR, its donors and implementing partners must improve livelihoods programming by conducting more market analysis and designing programs that actually link refugee women to viable markets and increase income.** Grants and in-kind support to start small businesses must be large enough to make them competitive. Additionally, interventions based on some form of market assessment and that target a market niche show the most promise. Consideration of risks of gender-based violence, both within and outside the camp, must be taken into account to ensure that livelihoods interventions lead to increased protection as well as economic opportunity.
- ▶ **UNHCR, its donors and implementing partners must continue to include and expand the participation of host community members in activities designed to improve economic opportunities** in order to decrease tension over natural resources and expand access to economic opportunities that may lead to a decrease in risk of gender-based violence for refugee women.
- ▶ **UNHCR and its donors should continue to support gender-based violence “coffee talk” discussion groups as well as other awareness raising campaigns that appear to be addressing the underlying norms that condone violence against women.**

- ▶ **UNHCR, its donors and implementing partners must develop programs that will prepare refugees for resettlement in a third country.** In addition to English and computer skills training, further research should be conducted on potential trainings that will meet labor market demand in the future country of residence. Women's participation in these trainings should be actively solicited and the provision of evening classes, child care and other features that would facilitate women's attendance should be incorporated. Preparing refugee women for work after resettlement may lead to a decreased risk of exploitation and gender-based violence in the resettlement country.
- ▶ **Livelihoods interventions for refugee women should contain components that increase the control women have over income they may make.** The establishment of a "safe savings" component, combined with a discussion group series on gender roles, household decision-making and conflict resolution may be appropriate. This model has been effectively used in other settings.<sup>73</sup>
- ▶ **UNHCR and its donors must provide funding to increase the scale and scope of livelihoods programs.** At present, less than 10 percent of camp populations benefit from livelihoods programs.<sup>74</sup>

## Notes

- 1 The Women's Refugee Commission conducted focus groups with 12 Somali women in Aw Barre on September 24, 2008; 16 Somali women in Aw Barre refugee camp on September 24; 17 Somali women in Kebri Beyah refugee camp on September 25; 12 Somali women in Kebri Beyah refugee camp on September 25; 4 Eritrean-Tigrinya women at the Shimelba refugee camp on September 30; 3 refugee women staff of the Shimelba camp Women's Center on September 30; and 8 Eritrean-Kunama refugee women at the Shimelba refugee camp on October 1.
- 2 U.S. Department of State Background Note: Ethiopia, October 2008.
- 3 Table 1. Refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees (refugees and IDPs), stateless persons and others of concern to UNHCR by country/territory of asylum, end-2007. Data are provisional and subject to change. Table established: 3 June 2008.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 U.S. Department of State Background Note: Ethiopia, October 2008.
- 6 Forced Migration Review Country Guide: Ethiopia, by Bezaiet Dessalegn SEE DATE
- 7 Save the Children, Ethiopia program note, <http://www.savethechildren.org/countries/africa/ethiopia.html>.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Thomson Reuters Foundation, AlertNet. "Somalia troubles." [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/SO\\_PEA.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/SO_PEA.htm). Cited Nov 13, 2008.
- 10 UNHCR, "UNHCR ETHIOPIA National Programme: Fact Sheet." April 2008. Cited 13 Nov 2008.
- 11 UNHCR, "UNHCR Global Report 2007"
- 12 Miles, Tom. "Kebribeyah Refugee Camp: Indoor Air Pollution Monitoring Summary." BioEnergy Lists: Biomass Cooking Stoves. Last Updated 8 March 2007.
- 13 Meeting with ARRA, Aw Barre, September 24, 2008.
- 14 Interview with GAIA Association, September 24, 2008.
- 15 UNHCR, "UNHCR ETHIOPIA National Programme: Fact Sheet," April 2008. Cited November, 13 2008.
- 16 Interview with IRC Field Coordinator, Shire, September 28, 2008.
17. Interview with ARRA, Shimelba, September 29, 2008.
18. Ibid
19. UNHCR, 2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons, June 2008. p. 12.
- 20 UNHCR, "Eritrean Refugees in Shimelba camp, Tigray Region, Ethiopia," p. 2.
- 21 Focus Group #1, Kebri Beyah, 17 women, September 25, 2008.
- 22 Focus group #2, Kebri Beyah, 12 women, September 25, 2008.
- 23 Interview with IRC gender-based violence staff, Shimelba, September 29, 2008.
- 24 Focus group #2, Kebri Beyah, 12 women, September 25, 2008.

25 Ibid.

26 Aubarre Focus Group #2, 16 women, September 24, 2008.

27 Interview and site visit with ZOA, Aubarre, September 24, 2008.

28 Focus group #1, 12 women, Aw Barre, September 24, 2008.

29 Ibid.

30 Meeting with ARRA, Shimelba camp, September 29, 2008.

31 Focus group, 8 refugee women, Shimelba camp, October 1, 2008.

32 Ibid.

33 O'Brien, Cheryl. "UNHCR Kebri Beyah Camp Report." Project Gaia Research Studies, Stokes Consulting Group. 2005.

34 Ibid. pp. 1-2.

35 <http://www.unhcr.org/gr07/index.html>.

36 Ibid.

37 Focus Group #1, Kebri Beyah, 17 women, September 25, 2008.

38 Focus group #1, 12 women, Aw Barre, September 24, 2008.

39 Focus Group #1, Kebri Beyah, 17 women, September 25, 2008.

40 Focus Group #1 Kebri Beyah, 17 women, September 25, 2008 and Focus group #2, Kebri Beyah, 12 women, September 25, 2008.

41 Focus group with 8 refugee women, Shimelba camp, October 1, 2008.

42 Focus group with 4 refugee women, Shimelba camp, September 30, 2008.

43 Interview with ZOA Country Director, Addis Ababa, October 3, 2008.

44 Focus group with 4 refugee women, Shimelba camp, September 30, 2008.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Interview with ZOA Country Director, Addis Ababa, October 3, 2008.

48 Interview with UNHCR, Shire, October 1, 2008.

49 Interview with ZOA Country Director, Addis Ababa, October 3, 2008.

50 Interview with IRC Community Services, September 26, 2008.

51 Ibid.

52 Interview with refugee woman business owner, September 29, 2008.

53 Interview IRC staff, Shimelba camp, September 29, 2008.

54 Ibid.

55 Interview with ZOA Country Director, Addis Ababa, October 3, 2008.

56 Interview with refugee woman business owner, September 29, 2008.

57 Ibid.

58 Interview with IRC Community Services, September 26, 2008.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Interview with ZOA Program Officer, Aw Barre camp, September 24, 2008.

63 Focus group #1, 12 women, Aubarre, September 24, 2008.

64 Ibid.

65 Aubarre Focus Group #2, 16 women, September 24, 2008.

65 Focus Group #2, 16 women, Aw Barre, September 24, 2008.

67 Meeting with UNHCR, Addis Ababa, October 3, 2008.

68 Ibid.

69 Meeting with IRC Field Coordinator, Shimelba Camp, September 29, 2008.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Focus group with 4 refugee women, Shimelba camp, September 30, 2008.

73 See the Intervention With Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE) study. Understanding the Impact of a Microfinance-Based Intervention on Women's Empowerment and the Reduction of Intimate Partner Violence in South Africa. American Journal of Public Health, October 2007, Vol 97, No. 10.

74 Meeting with UNHCR, Addis Ababa, October 3, 2008.

## Mission Statement

The Women's Refugee Commission works to improve the lives and defend the rights of refugee and internally displaced women and children. The Women's Refugee Commission is legally part of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. It receives no direct financial support from the IRC.

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