

## CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

**International Conference on Refugee Rights, June 17-19, 2006, Toronto**

### INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING REPORT FROM CONCLUDING PLENARY

#### PLANNING ONGOING NETWORKING

Participants at the concluding plenary agreed by consensus to:

1. Create a **steering committee** to oversee the development of a global network (informal or formal) on refugee rights coming out of this conference.
2. The steering committee to establish **electronic communication** (listserv) between conference participants and other NGOs interested in networking on refugee rights (the exact form of listserv or listservs type to be decided by the committee).
3. The steering committee to plan for another **conference** to be held in two years in a different region of the world.

In discussing and endorsing this proposal, participants highlighted a number of considerations, including the following:

- We should move forward step-by-step.
- We should have got started long ago on this.
- Participants and regional associations should invite other organizations to connect with this network.
- We should ensure youth involvement.
- We should include organizations/regions not represented at the conference because of travel document/visa barriers.
- It is important to bring together practitioners – those working on the ground. We should be careful not to lose the grassroots nature of our efforts.
- We should aim to have the steering committee meet outside of the conferences in order to oversee the development of the network.
- We need to ensure gender equity in representation and the representation of refugees.
- We should use our common voice to work together. We should aim for an organization that will speak on our behalf.
- The Steering Committee could take on some advocacy work in consultation with the network.

Volunteers were invited to give their names if interested in serving on the committee. It was understood that those who volunteer should be prepared to step back if appropriate to ensure the best possible representation on the Steering Committee.

## **ACTION PLANS/REQUESTS FOR ACTION**

NB the action plans were presented for information. There was no attempt to achieve consensus on the content or the priority. Organizations, both those who participated in the conference and those who did not, are invited to follow up on as many of the plans and requests for action as correspond to their mandates and priorities.

### **A. ACTION PLANS DEVELOPED IN THE STRATEGIZING SESSIONS**

#### **1. Annual Tripartite Consultation on Resettlement (ATC)**

NGOs at ATC develop strategy to provide more timely input into the UNHCR Global Needs Assessment.

Who: CCR reps to ATC June 22-23, 2006

Submitted by: Paulette Johnson (Paulette.Johnson@catholicsocialservices.ab.ca)

#### **2. UNHCR Resettlement Service**

Co-operation around ensuring new UNHCR Resettlement Service has a mandate that gives it much greater capacity to bring about effective use of resettlement as a protection tool.

Who: CCR reps to ATC June 22-23, 2006 (linking up with US, Australian and NZ NGOs)

Longer term: Have an NGO Focal point for ATC that plays a much more active role throughout the year in promoting dialogue and debate around ATC issues.

Submitted by: Resettlement strategizing caucus

#### **3. Voluntary repatriation**

Develop/facilitate a workshop for 2007 Pre-EXCOM on voluntary repatriation/re-establishment practices in compliance with the Conventions.

Who: NGOs to self-identify via the new listserv asap. Should involve humanitarian assistance NGOs.

CCR will solicit participation of NGOs in developing a proposal for the workshop.

#### **4. Access to protection (interdiction)**

Develop interdiction research project.

Who: Sharry Aiken and Andrew Brouwer (and others)

Timeline: Broad parameters to be developed by fall 2006. More information at CCR working group meeting in September 2006.

Further info: Develop networks among NGOs, lawyers and academics, starting with email list from interdiction caucus session.

Longer-term: International lawyers network and NGO network to share information and strategies. Interdiction research project.

How to get there: Court challenges, and appeals to the “court of public opinion”. Sharing of successes amongst network.

Submitted by Jenny Jeanes (jeanes@actionr.org) and Andrew Brouwer (abrouwer@sympatico.ca)

## **5. Haitian refugees in Caribbean/US/Canada**

- a) determine protection needs for Haitian refugees in region. (by Oct. 2006)
- b) Create links between local NGOs working for/with Haitians; support their proposals for actions (by Dec. 2006)
- c) Promote US and Canadian involvement in search for durable solutions. (ongoing)  
(include in everything involving durable solutions a specific assessment of gender issues and needs of women and children).

Who: LIRS in collaboration with other partners.

Longer-term: Organize a fact-finding mission to travel to a number of Caribbean “refugee receiving” countries or regions e.g. Guadeloupe, Turks and Caicos, to determine exact protection needs and get the refugees’ point of view as well.

## **6. Stateless persons**

Letter of concern re. stateless mandate to UNHCR from groups present at CCR.

Letter to High Commissioner of Human Rights re. same.

Who: Refugees International and Action réfugiés Montréal

By August 2006.

To be followed by other activities.

## **7. Palestinian refugees (right of return)**

Push for implementation of ICJ Advisory Opinion and other relevant UN resolutions and for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until it abides by international law.

Who: Badil Resource Centre + BDS civil society secretariat.

Longer-term: bring the case of Palestinian refugees to court. Provide /identify international agency to provide protection to Palestinian refugees.

## **8. Information-sharing on Handbooks/Protocols**

- A. Information-sharing on handbooks guiding a) government officials about the procedures laid down by the law for delivering refugee rights; and b) refugees on how to access their rights.
- B. Information-sharing on sexual and gender-based protocol that would: a) integrate actions on responding to sexual and gender-based violence and other sexual and gender-based issues; in to the respective programs and activities of government agencies, social service providers and other relevant stakeholders; b) establish a referral system among the mentioned actors, for responding to gender issues.

How and who? Information-sharing can be achieved by including in CCR's website under "Documents/Information available" the link for accessing the handbook and the protocol. CFSI would submit its handbook and protocol to UNHCR Manila within the year. CFSI would share the said handbook and protocol to other NGOs through CCR's website. While the handbook that CFSI would produce is Philippine-centric, other NGOs might want to use them as examples/models for their own country's handbook and protocol, should they decide to have one. They, in turn, could also share their handbook and protocol through CCR's website.

When? To be initiated within 2006, and continuing.

### **9. Detention and forced return of Tibetan refugees and asylum-seekers in Nepal**

Highlight the situation and campaign for release through media/NGOs and agencies. Urge Canadian government to press Nepal for release by holding talks with Nepal Immigration Office.

Who: Tsering Norzom, Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario, twaontario@yahoo.ca

By: July 2006

### **10. Welcoming communities**

American campaign against xenophobia and in favour of integration.

All interested organizations to do it, Victor Porter (vporter@mosaicbc.com) to take the lead.

By December 2006.

Submitted by the Spanish working session on hospitable communities.

### **11. Spanish-speaking network**

To research feasibility of facilitating access to the development of a virtual environment for a Spanish-speaking network.

Who will oversee it: Florence Gruer, Francisco Rico-Martinez, Carolina Gajardo.

July – December 2006

## **B. REQUESTS FOR ACTION**

The following items were requests for action from participants at the conference (and other organizations):

### **1. EXCOM conclusion "women at risk"**

Write letters, based on the RCUSA June 14 letter and attachments as model, to governments calling on them to include forceful rights protective language in the EXCOM Conclusion on "women" for October 2006.

USCRI will post a sample letter with proposed language on its website [www.refugees.org](http://www.refugees.org)

USCRI can provide addresses and contacts for governments.

### **2. Rights and interests in local integration**

a) Advocate within governments and with UNHCR for rights-based development funding tied to local integration of refugees.

b) Advocate for funding for projects that will enhance refugee rights.

### **3. Colombia**

**Short-term concrete action:** accompaniment and logistic support from lawyers organizations to ensure respect of the rights of victims of armed conflict in Colombia (Bill 975 – 2005).

**Who will do it:** National Association of Colombian Displaced Persons and Refugees (ANDESCOL). Representative in Canada: Hubertis Contreras.

**Who will take the lead to ensure it happens:** ANDESCOL, with its national direction committee and the grassroots-level organizations.

**Deadline by which it will happen:** This will depend on the terms of Bill 975, 2005, decree 4760.

**Any further information about what we will do or how we will do it:** sensitization and trainings for displaced persons regarding their rights as per above mentioned bill.

**Person submitting action item:** Hubertis Daniel Contreras, National Direction ANDESCOL; rancheria781@hotmail.com

### **4. Colombia**

In view of the consequences of the social and armed conflict in Colombia, press:

- governments, UNHCR and organizations to respond to the situation of the displaced and refugees who are victims of the Colombian conflict;
- the Colombian government to assume its responsibilities with respect to the internally displaced;
- international aid organizations to support local initiatives that work with Colombian refugees in all countries.

Submitted by Juan Manuel Toro Lara (juantorolara@hotmail.com)

## **C. TOPICS REQUIRING OUR ATTENTION**

The following topics were identified as important for our networking efforts, without the full details of how and who being fully worked out:

### **1. Voluntary repatriation and economic, social and cultural rights**

Develop and define guidelines for voluntary repatriation and ESC rights.

### **2. Sexual and gender-based violence**

a) Develop a sexual and gender-based protocol to be implemented in each country. b) Develop a handbook on the procedure for accessing refugee rights.

### **3. Sensitization against torture and for protection for victims**

### **4. Detention, Torture, Best interests of the child, Trafficking**

## **D. SUGGESTIONS FOR STRUCTURES FOR INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING**

**Listserv:** NGOs from conference will create a listserv to address the advancement of refugee rights. USCRI is the proposed host for listserv. CCR will send out a post-conference report through the listserv to all conference participants, asking them to join the listserv and informing them of the opportunity to post resources on the list. CCR will send USCRI electronic version of emails for all participants at conference to create listserv by June 22, 2006.

**Directory:** Establish a directory of contact information for NGOs within countries for networking. Identify focal points from each country/region.

**Website:** Grant proposal for website and discussion list.

**Website:** Create a networking website for information sharing and interactive consultation. “everyday is refugee day” (to make sure we visit the website every day) Pillkyu Hwang

**Electronic discussion groups:** CCR publish list of themes and regions; people volunteer to be moderator of a google discussion group; CCR send lists of thematic and regional discussion groups to whole conference list with instructions on how to join; moderator runs the discussion list. Kate Gauthier

### **Topic specific discussion groups:**

**Refugee status determination (RSD):** Be a contact for RSD – learning from each other and exchanging info. Put together advocacy efforts to improve RSD in the UNHCR in the pre-EXCOM and other forums. Rana Ibrahim (ribrahim@amera-uk.org)

**Best Interests of the Child:** Develop communication among individuals interested in the subject. Deborah Isaacs. Individuals will Deborah Isaacs (debisaacs@yahoo.com) if they are interested in belonging.

**Human Trafficking (specifically organ trade):** Create network, national and international (Lindsey McKay)

**Iraqi refugees:** Develop an email network of organizations interested in advocating for Iraqi refugees. Helen Smith-McIntyre (helensmithmcintyre@hotmail.com)

### **Other organizing suggestions:**

#### **Detention network**

Contact participants at conference with information on international detention coalition. Send out membership applications to all. Recruit volunteers to be part of working groups. Share information on stateless people and detention – post on website. Anna Gallagher (anna@comunicacionglobal.com)

#### **International networking between francophones**

Make contact with francophone organizations internationally. Julie Bédard-Mathieu (juanmoreno\_protection@bellnet.ca)