



CoRMSA Newsletter

Edition 2 — May 2011

Welcome to CoRMSA's second edition Newsletter. This newsletter covers issues related to World Refugee Day, Monitoring at Refugee Reception Offices and Border Monitoring, the continued xenophobic attacks, statelessness and articles on achievements by organisations in the sector over the last few months. We thank all the contributors to this edition. CoRMSA welcomes feedback on the newsletter and suggestions for articles that you would like to see in the future, kindly contact Alfani, communications@cornsa.org.za in this regard.

Invitation: 2011 World Refugee Day Commemorations

The Forced Migration Working Group invites refugees, asylum seekers, the civil society organizations working with migrants, interested stakeholders and local communities to the 2011 World Refugee Day commemorations. The event will take place on Sunday the 19th of June 2011 at St Martins Catholic Church, 395 Moses Street, Orlando West, Soweto. The starting time is 8am until 4pm. The Department of Home Affairs, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Gauteng Premier, and South African role model celebrities have also been invited.

You are also encouraged, in your own capacity, to invite refugees and migrants in your community. Free transport to and from Soweto will be available. For further details please contact Jeanette at the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) on 011 333 0119, email: jmlesisa@gmail.com, or Wozani at the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants (CoRMSA) on 011 403 0032, email: wozani@cornsa.org.za

Parliamentary update: Refugees Amendment Bill and the Immigration Amendment Bill

After almost a month's recess, the parliamentary portfolio committees resumed their work on 22 May 2011. Two important pieces of legislation are currently before the Home Affairs Portfolio Committee (HAPC), namely the Refugees' Amendment Bill and the Immigration Amendment Bill. The Refugees' Amendment Bill was debated both within the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. Some amendments have been suggested, and no further progress has been made on this Bill as of 29 March 2011.

The controversial Immigration Amendment Bill has been debated and passed within the HAPC. Objections to the Bill on the basis of content and substance were made by the Democratic Alliance, the Congress of the People, and the Inkatha Freedom Party. The Democratic Alliance also expressed its dissatisfaction with the way the Bill was processed. However, despite this, the Bill was approved by the majority of the HAPC members. This Bill has gone to the National Council of Provinces for further debate. The HAPC was due to get feedback from the National Council of Provinces on May 24 but this has been postponed without any indication of a future date. Note that the parliamentary committee meeting scheduled for June does currently not include further debates on either of these Bills.

For more details please contact Gail Eddy at gail@cornsa.org.za

CoRMSA Regional Advocacy Work Overview

The Regional Advocacy Network has set up a Blog

A regional advocacy network was initiated in cooperation with the Jesuit Refugee Service.

As a result, the Regional Network has now set up a blog:

<http://forceddisplacementhumanrights.wordpress.com>

All newsletter readers are encouraged to send any relevant information, news, links to other organisations, and links to useful documents and research to be posted on the blog. The blog is however at its initial stage, but it is projected to become a useful tool for information sharing to endorse the extension of the network.

July 2011 AU Summit: Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development

The 17th Assembly and Ordinary Session of the AU will be held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from June 30 to July 1. CoRMSA has been officially invited to the Summit as an "Invited Guest". CoRMSA seeks to maximize this opportunity to engage the AU on refugee and migrant issues in the region and continues its lobbying strategies on identified issues.

For more details please contact Roshan Dadoo at roshan@cornsa.org.za

Home Affairs refuses admission to Somali asylum seekers

South African and Zimbabwean immigration officials met in Beit Bridge and agreed to deal jointly with irregular migration between the two countries amid revelations that 64 Somali refugees were rounded up in the border town as they attempted to cross the border into South Africa illegally. The emergency meeting followed growing concerns by immigration authorities from the two countries over an influx of Somali refugees, who have been continuously flocking into Zimbabwe in transit to South Africa through the Beit Bridge Border Post. The Somalis, most of whom had no documents to prove their refugee status, were denied entry by SA Home Affairs officials at the Beit Bridge border post.

South Africa's Deputy Director General of immigration, Mr Jackson McKay, said there was a need to deal effectively with the irregular movement of people. "We are really concerned about irregular migration, and so we met and agreed that there was a need to apply the law and address the issue of irregular migration within our territories. We also resolved to come up with effective, tangible measures to deal with illegal immigrants. The law is very clear that if one intends to use our borders, they should have a valid travel document. "We denied the Somalis entry into our country because they didn't have the required documents (asylum

permits) which they were supposed to acquire from the first country of safety before proceeding to South Africa, including any other country,” he said. Zimbabwe’s Principal Director of immigration, Mr Clemence Masango, said the meeting was aimed at addressing the perennial problem of irregular migration and its vices taking place between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

“Zimbabwe and South Africa are signatories to the Geneva Convention on refugees. However, we have noted that of late there has been laxity at our border posts, resulting in an increase in irregular movement of people, some of whom would be masquerading as refugees.” Masango said all persons entering and leaving the country would be admitted on the strength of a valid travel document, in line with the Immigration Act. “Those claiming asylum status will also be treated in accordance with the set national and international guidelines on refugees in consultation with the Office of the UN Commissioner of Refugees. Anyone not going through these structures becomes an illegal immigrant and there is a law to deal with that.”

Regarding the Somalis who were stranded in Beit Bridge, Masango said they were illegal immigrants, since they were not confirmed as refugees by the first country of safety. “Since they don’t have those supporting documents, they are illegal immigrants and our law enforcement structures are addressing the situation,” he said. The officer commanding the police in Beit Bridge, Chief Superintendent Hosiah Mukombero, said they rounded up a new group of 64 Somalis soon after its arrival in the border town. The first group of Somalis, numbering 97, which was refused entry into South Africa, is suspected to have used illegal entry points along the Limpopo River to cross the border. The refugees use Zimbabwe as their transit point to South Africa after having entered that country through Nyamapanda Border Post.

Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) Call on the Police to Protect Foreign Nationals and Foreign-owned Businesses in the Pre-election Intimidation and Attacks in Gauteng Province.

Terrified foreign traders in several locations around Gauteng are closing their shops and businesses in the wake of the threats issued to them by the Greater Gauteng Business Forum. There are at least nine affected areas which include, Freedom Park, Ramaphosa, Kagiso, Ratanda, Motsoaledi, Katlehong, Diepsloot, Tembisa, and Orlando East. In the last few weeks, a group of local business people calling themselves the Greater Gauteng Business Forum (GGBF) and motivated by xenophobia has gone outside of the law to distribute eviction letters to all foreign owned businesses in townships across Johannesburg.

The GGBF has no authority to undertake these actions. The law does not empower private individuals to decide who is entitled to reside in the country or operate a business. Only the Department of Home Affairs is authorized to investigate whether a foreigner is residing legally in the country, while other state institutions are empowered to authorize and regulate business. Any concerns around these issues, must be referred to the relevant authorities. According to Kaajal Ramjathan-Keogh, head of the Refugee and Migrant Rights Programme at Lawyers for Human Rights, “The GGBF’s actions seem motivated less by concern over the legality of these businesses and more to do with self-interest and xenophobic sentiment toward foreigners in South Africa”.

Lawyers for Human Rights are also concerned by the lack of a forceful police response, and possible involvement in the evictions. The police are tasked with protecting all persons in the country and this protection must extend to protecting foreign individuals from this kind of harassment and intimidation. Ramjathan-Keogh warned that individuals and groups like the

GGBF need to be aware that their actions are unlawful and they could face criminal sanctions if they decide to continue with these evictions, harassment and intimidation. In Ramaphosa for instance, the police turned a blind eye to the unlawful actions of the GGBF and may even have assisted them with their intimidation campaign. A failure to act upholds lawlessness and encourages individuals to take the law into their own hands whenever they deem it necessary.

Foreigners in these communities also have a responsibility to ensure that they are residing legally in the country and that their businesses are compliant with the laws of this country. But under the law, they also have a right to be free from unlawful harassment and intimidation, and to be protected by the police. ***For more details please contact Kaajal at kaajal@lhr.org.za***

Zimbabwe Exiles Forum (ZEF) Concerned about Xenophobia in South Africa

Reports indicate a resurgence of xenophobic attacks especially against Somali nationals. It is now important for South Africa to frankly confront this phenomenon and to take measures that can truly address this issue and to offer redress to those who have, over the years, been subjected to this inhumanity. It is suggested that rather than blaming “criminal elements”, it is urgently imperative that the South African government be proactive in not only taking preventive measures, but also in putting a firm lid on this vicious cycle of intolerance in the South African society.

Some of the possible causes of xenophobia may be related to the legacy of apartheid. The country has not done enough to heal the nation in order to expunge some of the negative impact that apartheid had on people and this may find interpretation in attacks on those perceived in society to be lesser than those previously exploited. As far as the hate crimes are concerned, there seems to be a failure to prevent impunity through effective prosecution. Foreigners in this country are the target of reckless media reportage, unscrupulous politicians and failed or aspiring business persons who have ascribed the socio-economic woes of the country to those coming into the country mainly from Africa, thus in the end fanning the fires of xenophobia.

In attempting to address the issue of xenophobia, the government should call for an emergency stakeholders’ meeting on xenophobia to find creative ways of preventing a recurrence of attacks. However, it is not sufficient to deal with attacks only, but to also deal with policy, laws and practices that may enhance the xenophobic treatment of non-South Africans in hospitals and other places. There is therefore an urgent need to implement recommendations by the South African Human Rights Commission post the 2008 attacks. Another complementary recommendation to this could be the crafting of a law that makes it hate speech to call non-nationals aliens in this country, apart from criminalizing practices. There may be need for a special justice system in the mould of the world one to deal with crimes of hate. Finally, it is imperative for the government to embrace civil society in any way forward. ***For more details please contact Gabriel Shumba at gabmrech@gmail.com***

LHR Launch a Statelessness Project

What is Statelessness and how to identify cases of Statelessness?

Statelessness refers to a lack of nationality. It arises either from lack of a legally meritorious claim to citizenship in any internationally recognised state (de jure statelessness) or the inability to prove or access one's nationality, despite meeting legal requirements, because of practical considerations or discriminatory practices (de facto stateless).

Despite the global and widespread occurrence of statelessness reported by the UNHCR, the problem continues to receive only minimal attention internationally. South Africa is no exception. Although some general protective measures are in place, there is no dedicated procedure for determining statelessness, no national legislation or policy declaration on prevention and reduction of statelessness and no protection or documentation system for stateless persons. South Africa is not a signatory to the two international Human Rights conventions dedicated to the problem. In some instances, the state's practices are in fact an aggravating circumstance behind *de facto* statelessness. Having identified this lack of awareness of the problem and its causes, and a dearth in legal protection of stateless persons in this country, Lawyers for Human Rights have recently launched a Statelessness Project.

Thus far, the project has identified the large migrant population in South Africa as being at high risk of statelessness. Research has revealed that most asylum seekers and economic migrants in the country are without any citizenship documentation. Yet every year over 90% of the 200 000 asylum applications lodged with the Department of home affairs are rejected, necessitating the return of these undocumented persons. The result of this may be that, upon their rejection and return to their home country, these persons may be unable to prove their origin. Furthermore, children born to these migrants during their stay in South Africa experience great difficulty in documenting their birth.

Discriminatory practices at Home Affairs offices result in insurmountable barriers to obtaining birth certificates for the offspring of foreign illegals or asylum-seekers, despite their right to this documentation. Consequently, those who remain in the country with births undocumented will be unable to apply for South African citizenship at age 18 and will effectively be stateless. For those who return to their parent's home country, they lack proof of their claim to citizenship by descent. This is especially true of those parents who are themselves also undocumented.

Interestingly, the project has revealed that the problem of statelessness in South Africa is not limited to those who originate elsewhere. Indeed, a large proportion of the clientele the project has served thus far are in fact struggling to secure their right to *South African* citizenship. The inaccessibility and lack of awareness of the availability and importance of Home Affairs services have led to very low rates of birth registration in rural areas.

Furthermore, there are reports of South Africans living in out-lying rural areas having to battle against Home Affairs' assumptions they are actually immigrants from neighbouring nations. Single fathers of children born out of wedlock remain legally incapable of registering the birth of their children in circumstances where the mother is unavailable to consent hereto. And to confound these issues, Home Affairs is threatening to end the availability of late birth registration, which will effectively place all of the above categories of persons at

risk of remaining permanently undocumented. ID theft and fraudulent procurement of IDs continue to affect over 100 000 South Africans, according to Home Affairs statistics. Victims of these crimes may not be able to provide the required proof of South African citizenship, leaving them *de facto* stateless.

In response to the above, the Statelessness Project has developed the following objectives to provide direct legal services to persons who are either *de facto* or *de jure* stateless or at risk of falling into either category; to identify and raise awareness of the causes of statelessness and populations of concern in South Africa; to make recommendations and advocate for legislation, policies and procedures to reduce and prevent statelessness; and to advocate for signature and ratification of the two international legal instruments dedicated to the reduction of the problem and the protection of those experiencing it. **For more details please contact Jessica George at Jessica@lhr.org.za or Rosalind Elphick at Rosalind@lhr.org.za**

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU)—Refugee Rights Centre Monitors DHA Officials at the Port Elizabeth Refugee Reception Centre

The NMMU-Refugee Rights Centre has been monitoring the general conduct and procedures of the DHA officials during early morning hours and making migrants more aware of the Centre's existence and the types of assistance available for them. The above mentioned attempt by the NMMU-Refugee Rights Centre was welcomed by asylum seekers and refugees in long queues outside the Refugee Centre waiting for assistance.

However, a challenge has surfaced amongst Ethiopian nationals. They claim that they purposely get rid of all identification documentations out of fear that their life would be in danger should the Ethiopian government find out who they are. This causes a lot of difficulties at Home Affairs as they are not being assisted without any form of identification. NMMU-Refugee Rights Centre has been intervening in such cases by assisting clients with correspondence to DHA.

Asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected approach the Centre for appeal representations. The Centre is attempting to hold a meeting with the new Chief Director of the Refugee Appeal Board to get clarity on pending cases and problems in order to inform its clients accordingly.

The Centre experiences difficulties in its correspondence with the Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs. And migrants' social needs are still a matter of concern in the Eastern Cape area. The Centre is also conducting investigations on the attacks on foreign-owned businesses. **For more details please contact Sarine Broderick at Sarine.Broderick@nmmu.ac.za**

Refugee Ministries Centre (RMC) Reports on Shortcomings at Refugee Reception Offices

RMC continues to provide translation and interpretation services at Refugee Reception Offices (RROs) throughout the country. However, this has not been without its challenges. RMC continues to raise these issues and address them by engaging relevant authorities in the Department of Home Affairs (DHA).

One major challenge which RMC has noted at the DHA is lack of clear policies to counter corruption within the Department. This continues to fuel corruption at RROs. Also access to asylum application continues to be a challenge due to policy changes and *ad hoc* plans by the government without involving other relevant stakeholders. Another challenge that needs to be highlighted is the communication breakdown with the refugee affairs senior management which leaves a lot of pending issues unresolved.

On the other hand, RMC is currently working with the Department of Education (DoE) on how to employ refugees and asylum seekers. All refugees and asylum seekers seeking for a teaching position under the DoE are encouraged to contact RMC offices or contact Stella at stellamk@refugeeministriescentre.org.za for more information.

Musina Legal Advice Office (MLAO) Reports on Border Monitoring Work

During monitoring work, MLAO paralegals identified a young girl who was attacked by the *magumaguma* as she was travelling through the bushes at night with her brother. As the girl and her brother crossed the Limpopo River, they were approached by *magumaguma* who demanded money and cell phones but they had no money or any mobile gadgets on them. The *magumaguma* attacked them and broke the leg of the girl. She was assisted by her brother who called an ambulance and she was immediately rushed to the hospital. She has been discharged and she is currently recovering at the United Reformed Church shelter in Nancefield.

The South African Police Service (SAPS) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) are manning the border line in collaboration with their counter parts from Zimbabwe in an effort to intercept the activities perpetrated by the *magumaguma* who operate along the Limpopo River mugging asylum seekers, taking away their belongings and raping women. However, more needs to be done by both South African and Zimbabwean authorities to curb *magumaguma*'s activities.

On the other hand, the issue of *malaisha* remains a great concern for MLAO as they play a major role in the transportation of both minors and adults crossing the border. This practice creates a potential for human trafficking. There is need for a strong mechanism to abate this situation. **For more information contact Jacob Matakanye or James at mataks@telkomsa.net**

ProBono.Org Refugee Legal Clinic

ProBono.Org runs a Refugee Legal Clinic at its Johannesburg office every Thursday. During 2010 it attended 292 cases in its clinic and 87 by the end of April 2011. Volunteer attorneys from different attorney's firms staff the clinic. ProBono.Org receives these cases mainly from NGOs working with refugees such as Sonke Gender Justice Network, Lawyers for Human Rights, the Jesuit Refugee Service and many others.

During the first four months of 2011 the vast majority of clients were made up of the Democratic Republic of Congo's nationals. About 20% were Zimbabweans, Ethiopians, Ugandans, Nigerians, Somalis, Cameroonians, Batswana, Ghanaians and Sudanese.

Attorneys at ProBono.Org provide not only general legal advice to refugees and migrants but also advice and assistance on specific problems such as:

- Appeals on refugee applications
- Applications for temporary residence permits
- Applications for file consolidation
- Opening of bank accounts
- Access to state health care
- School enrolment
- Approaching the courts for cases of discrimination based on refugees status

Many clients are given advice about the processes and procedures they should follow on particular cases. A person seeking an asylum or a work permit for instance would be told which office to contact, what papers to complete and how to fill them in.

Recently, ProBono.Org attorneys assisted a client from the DRC who was detained in Lindela and deported. His appeal was dismissed last year largely because he was unable to answer questions, owing to a language barrier. He returned to South Africa and was attempting to re-apply for a refugee status. With legal intervention from ProBono.Org attorneys he managed to have his records retraced and a new appeal was launched.

Many cases are being effectively dealt with by the attorneys at the clinic but ProBono.org is deeply concerned about maladministration and especially unclear policies on the side of the Department of Home Affairs. However, ProBono.Org remains an eye and ear of refugees and migrants in South Africa. ***For more details please contact Erica Emdon at erica@probono-org.org***

Launch of African Centre for Migration and Society helps bolster the sector.

The African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) was launched at the University of Witwatersrand on 25 February 2011. Formerly known as the Forced Migration Studies Programme, this transformation will provide a stronger platform to continue teaching, researching and providing support for individuals and organizations across the sector. Through cutting edge research on behalf of the academy and civil society, the ACMS will continue to help inform public discourses, holding government accountable, and promoting progressive policy reform.

ACMS strives to be a touchstone on migration scholarship, theorizing, and activism. Mobilized by a desire for knowledge and social justice, the ACMS is home to anthropologists, political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, public health specialists, and demographers. Through its researchers, ACMS has partnered with film makers and artists, economists, and others working across boundaries in a supportive, scholarly community.

In this first quarter of the year, ACMS has launched two new research initiatives driven by the agenda for migrants' rights and development, hosted a panel discussion to delve into the China-South Africa migration. It has also showcased its research and created awareness through a photographic exhibition and published reports.

ACMS is one of the core partners in the Migrating out of Poverty, a Research Programme Consortium (RPC) funded by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID). The RPC is coordinated by the University of Sussex. It focuses on the relationship between migration and development and is located in six regions across Asia and Africa. The main goal of Migrating out of Poverty is to provide robust evidence on migration drivers and impacts that will contribute to improving policies affecting the lives and well-being of poor migrants, their communities and countries through a programme of innovative research, capacity building and policy engagement.

The RPC is dedicated to countering the negative depiction of migration which in Southern Africa is reflected in claims of increased insecurity, human trafficking, and increased unemployment for the local communities, loss of entrepreneurial and market opportunities, a strain on the social and physical infrastructure, and unmerited demands on social welfare. ACMS, as a core partner, will be working with interdisciplinary partners from South Africa and within the region who include research institutions, governmental departments, migrant groups and International organizations. The main aim of the RPC is to use research for policy change by partnering with various stakeholders working towards development. Migrant groups are key in their role of advocacy for migration and development. ACMS will be working with CoRMSA as one of the regional partners, for its strategic position in providing an interdisciplinary consortium advancing migrant rights.

ACMS continues to maintain its strong relationship with the French National Research Agency (ANR). This year the agency has funded an International Research Programme ***The Politics of Xenophobic Exclusion in Africa*** which will run for the next 3 years (2011-2013). This project will produce scholarly knowledge that intends to fill out some of the existing gaps in the understanding of xenophobic exclusion in Africa, answering questions defined by scientific agendas that are pertinent to informing decision-makers' understanding of societal trends and enriching their final decisions made. The case studies planned for this project should provide robust comparative elements enabling policy-makers to improve, according to their specific national trajectories, the role of and coordination between their different spheres of government in the management of this inevitable increase in diversity and adaptations to it.

In January, ACMS through one of its researchers, also published the report, "The Zimbabwean Documentation Process: Lessons Learned" about the Zimbabwean documentation process that took place at the end of 2010. This report was published in January and can be accessed in the ACMS website www.migration.org.za. The centre is also working in partnership with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), to launch a report that was produced after conducting research across South African Municipalities. Municipality stakeholders were interviewed to identify their challenges, in addressing how best local government can be enabled to respond to movement of persons. This research produced a report which will be launched in the coming months in the bid to enable municipalities to better manage migration for development.

The ACMS also provides an important venue for debate on migration issues affecting Southern Africa. On 7 April 2011, in its quest to provide discussion forums for migration, the Centre hosted a panel discussion on *China–Africa Migration*. This event was well attended by an audience that included scholars, journalists, government representatives and various advocacy groups. It was hosted in partnership with the Open Society Foundation and Wits

Journalism. The world renowned panellists included, Wilf Mbanga, the Founder and Editor of “The Zimbabwean” Newspaper, Howard French, an Open Society Fellow and author of “A Continent for the Taking” and Sanusha Naidu a Senior Researcher at the Human Sciences Research Council.

ACMS also co-created work on migrant women and sex work, “Working the City: Experiences of Migrant Women in Inner-city Johannesburg”, through a photographers gallery at the Market theatre, Johannesburg South Africa. Throughout the year, the ACMS will host speakers on scholarly debates and events intended to inform the public. Organisations wishing to participate in such fora are encouraged to contact the ACMS.

ACMS looks forward to working in partnership for social justice and the transformation of South Africa. As a centre for excellence, we appeal to various migrant groups to contact us in accessing any information that would be pertinent to their advocacy for migrants’ rights and migration policy. Our track record has illustrated the interdisciplinary approach we take in addressing human mobility through research that informs policy interventions and social justice. We therefore look forward to further enriching our partnership with CoRMSA and all its members. **For more details please contact Sharon Olago at olago.sharon@gmail.com**

The Refugees’ Battle for Access to Tertiary Education

“Policy Implications Learned from the Analysis of the Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers at Tertiary Education in Cape Town” is a study that document and analyze the experiences of 60 refugee and asylum seeker students from the four main public tertiary institutions in the Western Cape. This research identified what factors limit and, in some instances, impede refugee and asylum seekers’ access to tertiary education. It also highlighted the challenges that those who manage to access experience during their studies.

Among the findings, what emerged was that 37% are enrolled in degrees which are not their preferred choice. Furthermore 70% have low skilled or unskilled occupations as they attempt to juggle between their basic survival—and for many that of their families as well—and raising funds to pay the tuition. Night shifts doing car watch or working as security guards or waiters are a trend. Drop outs from university are frequent as coping in such stressful circumstances is hardly easy.

A significant gap between the theoretical right to study at universities and the practical experience of many refugees and asylum seekers was found. The study in fact has shown how the absence of a national policy or guidelines to universities on what minimum standards of treatment should apply to refugees and asylum seekers, has resulted in different policies (mostly unwritten) being developed and utilized across institutions. It also demonstrated that key university offices treat new and old situations affecting refugees during their studies on an *ad hoc* basis and with an “emergency relief” type approach. Administrative stalemates are frequently repeated, institutional learning is scarce and many university staff, including in key positions, have poor knowledge of what the meaning of basic concepts such as “refugee” and are often influenced by prejudices existing across some local communities.

What also emerged was the lack of involvement on the part of NGOs and refugee service providers in South Africa in advancing access to post-secondary education. It is high time that the civil society step up to the challenge of taking more than just notice of the tertiary education question. There is a real need for more active and consistent involvement in efforts ranging from lobbying universities and relevant Government Departments, to sourcing funding opportunities. Offering more consistent guidance and orientation to refugees and asylum seekers wishing to access tertiary education is also needed beyond merely handing out copies of the UNHCR/DAFI bursary application forms which can by no means cover the craving for education existing within the displaced youth and adults who have been granted asylum in the Republic of South Africa. **For more details please contact Elizabeth Mary Lanzi Mazzocchi at elizabeth.lanzi@gmail.com**

African Disabled Refugee Organisation (ADRO) Trains Mediators, Makers and Promoters of Peace.

The African Disabled Refugee Organisation (ADRO), in collaboration with Black Sash and other local organizations, has initiated a Human Rights Training Program in the greater Western Cape. The program's aim is to train 1000 Human Rights Peer Educators from 2011 through 2012.

The months of March and April set a promising example for the continuation of the program, especially in areas where many community leaders were unaware of their rights and those of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The training workshops additionally targeted informal traders and the youth. This programme has seen a positive response from the host Community.

Topics for the workshops include human rights, cultural diversity, anger management, conflict management through communication, constitutional rights and xenophobia. The discussion on human rights looks particularly at what makes them different from other rights such as civil and political. Further discussions focus on how someone's rights could be violated as well as many ways in which such violations could be countered.

The discussion on cultural diversity is used to emphasize differences among people from all over the world. There is an exercise that is being used to demonstrate the similarities that may exist between those from other parts of the world and their backgrounds as compared to locals. This is linked to a discussion on differences between refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants and economic migrants in an effort to enable participants to familiarize with these terms and ensure that they understand the difference. The end goal for this section is to draw a common understanding of the push factors behind refugees and migrants coming to South Africa in order to stifle any stereotypes observed mainly in townships.

The discussion on xenophobia is strategically designed to prevent its spread in the greater Western Cape. Participants, particularly women, are also encouraged to stand and take action against any form of violence. If you wish to be part of these ongoing workshops, or see a need for training within your own community, please contact ADRO's office at 6 Spin Street, 3rd Floor, Room 511-512, IDASA Building (next to parliament), tel: 021 461 6306, fax:0865413416.

Life Skills Development

ADRO is currently sharing its premises with the Vision Institute which focuses on education, training and development. Recently, the Institute organized a five day workshop on personal development, effective money management, customer relations, professional job seeking skills and C.V. writing. The Institute's aim is to support the community with basic skills marketable for job opportunities. ADRO makes use of these workshops to empower its clients.

Visits at the Maitland Refugee Reception Centre

After months of work in preparation, on March 30, ADRO organized an after-hours site visit to the Department of Home Affairs Refugee Reception Centre in Maitland. Working together with the Social Change Assistance Trust and Black Sash as part of the Community Map initiative, it was found that many asylum seekers had been spending nights at the Centre sometimes under heavy rains and cold weather without receiving assistance from the Refugee Office.

The majority of these applicants are seasonal migrant workers and farm labourers from the Northern Province and Piketberg seeking to renew their permits. On seasonal migrant workers, it is also worth noting that in areas like De Doorns, their plight and vulnerability in the greater Western Cape is little understood and poorly researched. Many of these workers, already forced to take off work for these obligatory visits to the Refugee Centre, cannot afford to cover the cost of direct transportation to Cape Town on their daily wages and so they must find alternative means. The Community Monitoring Programme is ongoing with further site visits planned to take place in the coming weeks.

Meeting with the Minister of Social Development

On February 15, ADRO and other local organizations working around social security held a meeting with the Minister of Social Development at the Older Persons Forum meeting. For ADRO, the most important issue was the provision of Older Persons Grants, particularly for disabled refugees. ADRO, along with other organizations such as Black Sash, CoRMSA, was successful in bringing this to the minister's attention. Other issues raised and discussed were those of Foster Care, in particular, a shortage of social workers which leads to excessive delays in attending to cases, and the issue of interpreting the controversial section of the Children's Act regarding visible means of support, especially in the case of refugee children. The Minister agreed to attend a follow up meeting. Subsequent to the February meeting, CoRMSA wrote a background paper on access to social security for refugees which was sent to the Minister's office as per the meeting agreement. ***For more details please contact Anaclet Mbayagu at m.anaclet@gmail.com***

Scalabrini's English School has reached Greater heights

Scalabrini's English School has been running since 2002 and it has been able to offer free English classes since then. The school has been growing rapidly and it can now boast a total of 423 students, half of whom are continuing students. Because of an increase in numbers and Scalabrini's limited financial capacity, it has become necessary to support the programme with a small registration fee of R100 per student per term. The registration fee

practice will be introduced from the next term, starting in mid-July 2011. These funds will help to ensure that the English School becomes a sustainable project that is able to continue to offer a crucial service to Scalabrini's clients and continue to expand in future.

The English School students recently wrote their mid-term tests, the first mid-term to be held to date. The majority of students did well, and it was a good opportunity for teachers to gauge students' understanding and to adjust the level of students who were finding their classes either too difficult or too easy.

Scalabrini needs English Teachers for the Next Term: July to December 2011

The Scalabrini Centre is looking for volunteer English teachers for Beginner and Intermediate classes for adult refugee students. Teachers must be ready to commit to a two hour class twice a week. Classes run from 9am to 4pm. There is a variety of time slots available. Applicants are advised to submit their CVs and a motivation letter to Daniela at Daniela@scalabrini.org.za as soon as possible.



Students attending English classes at the Scalabrini Centre

Human Rights Day Celebrations in De Doorns

On 21 March 2011, the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town supported members of the De Doorns community in hosting a human rights event under the theme: "*Celebrating Human Rights*". The purpose of the day was to promote respect for human rights, peace, tolerance and unity.

Over 500 people attended the event. Special guests included members of the local Catholic community church: Father Van Tomme, Father Gerardo, Father Stevens, Father Mario and six seminarians. There was also a large gathering of children in the field beside the Hex Valley People's Centre hall, participating in the Art Therapy activities offered by counsellors from the Scalabrini Centre, including face painting, beading and sketching.



Face painting during the “*Celebrating Human Rights*” event in De Doorns.

The message of “Unite as one”, taken from a previous and successful campaign for tolerance and unity, was communicated through the performances whose messages centred on preventing xenophobia and intolerance. The documentary “Baraka” was screened to stimulate dialogue around the realities of foreigners and their integration in local communities. The event was well attended and people took part in the debate and enthusiastically voiced their opinions around xenophobia and integration of foreigners.

The highlight and closing piece of the event was performed by the Hip Hop group “Driemanskap”. This four man group from Gugulethu represents a new generation of proudly South African artists who use Hip Hop to address important issues in the society and represent their origin. The main message from their music was unity of all humanity. Their piece was popularly received by the youth in the crowd, and led to an autograph session afterwards.

ARESTA Introduces New Modules into Cape Town Schools’ Curriculum

In celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention this year, ARESTA has begun another milestone to this occasion. The celebration will not just be about the World Refugee Day event but will contribute more to the awareness of refugee issues to both refugees and the South African society to pave common ways on how these communities can live together in peace and harmony. The emphasis of this approach is particularly put on young learners in suburbs and township schools from both primary and high schools to have knowledge about the plight of refugees and asylum seekers.



Alfred of ARESTA teaching South African laws and refugee legislation at a local school in Cape Town.

Although much has been discussed around refugee issues in the media, it is still believed that refugees and asylum seekers impact negatively on the host community. In order to eliminate these stereotypes and misconceptions, ARESTA in conjunction with UNHCR have designed an awareness program targeting learners and their families. The main objective of this program is to deliver positive educational messages that counter fear, ignorance and negative stereotypes among local communities.

As a pilot project, it started with identifying schools and learners who then attend a training that helps them to pioneer the program. It is hoped that this project will spread to other schools and perhaps other provinces before it eventually takes a national stance. The program incorporates the following modules: Introduction of the concepts, geography (world and Africa) and History (wars and liberation movements), value clarifications, United Nations and UNHCR (history, structure and mandate), African Union and SADC (history, structure and mandate), Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Freedom Charter, South African laws and legislation on refugees, national building and social cohesion, as well as discrimination, racism and xenophobia. ***For more details please contact Fred at advocacy@aresta.org.za***

PASSOP Launches a Gay Refugee Rights Advocacy Program

PASSOP has launched a new program that will advocate for the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) asylum seekers and refugees, to assist them with paralegal advice and empower them through a support network.

In many countries, LGBT people face constant harassment and harsh punishments, ranging from fines and imprisonments to death, solely for expressing their sexual orientation or gender identity. This unjust reality in countries ranging from Uganda to Malawi has led to a

number of refugees fleeing to South Africa seeking asylum on the grounds of sexual orientation. This has particularly been the case because South Africa is one of the progressive countries granting refugee status on the basis of sexual orientation.

However, despite South Africa's official position, the asylum application process is fraught with problems and many LGBT people are being turned away unjustly. Moreover, those who are granted status still often face discrimination and harassment in their new communities in South Africa. When xenophobia is compounded with homophobia, it leaves many gay and transgender immigrants in conditions not unlike those in the countries they fled in the first place.

The project's principal objectives are to assist LGBT refugees and asylum-seekers with paralegal advice regarding documentation and labour issues and to raise awareness around LGBT. The program will also monitor the South African government's performance in the asylum seeker and refugee determination processes to ensure that it is true to its commitment to protect those being persecuted due to their sexual orientation.

In addition to this, the program aims to build up a solidarity network to unite LGBT refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and provide them with emotional support and counselling. In partnership with other LGBT rights organizations, PASSOP will also promote advocacy within their communities to ensure their safety and integration. It is hoped that the program will empower these refugees and asylum seekers to engage in gay refugee rights activism and ensure that South Africa lives out its constitutional protection for the rights of gay men and women. ***For more details please contact David Burgsdorff at david@passop.co.za***

Refugee Children's Project (RCP) Interventions in May 2011

As it was indicated in the previous newsletter, RCP has introduced new activities that are due to resume when an appropriate venue is identified. RCP is looking for a place where all the new activities can be conducted without interfering with the general daily administration activities. In the meantime, RCP is about to initiate the distribution of school uniforms to its clients shortly.

On 20th May 2011, RCP conducted a workshop targeting the Department of Education, Social Development and the South African Social Security Agency. The aim of the workshop was to bring refugee and migrant parents on board and inform them about the existing policies and social grants available to them.

The target number was 20 parents but only 15 attended. The workshop was successful and many parents managed to get more information on their rights in the country. Parents however deplored the absence of Home Affairs and Social Development officials as they wanted some issues addressed around accessing Refugee Reception Offices and permits renewal as well as the accessibility of social grants. In upcoming workshops, RCP will ensure the presence of speakers from both departments to address some of these issues.

RCP is also liaising with the Department of Education to facilitate the enrolment of children who are not in school. Also many complaints are received from parents who are being denied access to school fee exemptions for not handing in their bank statements and pay slips to the school. It is worth mentioning that many of these parents do not have bank

accounts and they are not working for any firm that could issue them pay slips. Most of them are unemployed. RCP has resolved to take up these issues with schools before engaging the Department of Education. ***For more details please contact Germain M. Mauridi at germainm@rcpsa.org.za***

CoRMSA reserves the right to edit and/or shorten any article received for the purpose of this newsletter.