



CoRMSA
Consortium for
Refugees and Migrants
in South Africa

CoRMSA NEWSLETTER #2

1st November 2007

Welcome to the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information and updates that are occurring in the refugee and migration sector. The newsletter is open to all interested parties.

Delmas

In response to the displacement of Somali and other non-nationals in Delmas in Mpumalanga as discussed in our previous newsletter, CoRMSA is working with Lawyers for Human Rights, Islamic Relief, Jesuit Refugee Services, the South African Human Rights Commission, the Counter-Xenophobia Unit of the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Justice (Secretariat of the National Forum Against Racism) in trying to find a resolution to the conflict. Those displaced are currently being given material assistance from Islamic Relief. We are also working with the Mayor of Delmas' office as well as the Office of the Premier of Mpumalanga to address these issues.

Cape Town Refugee Reception Office

Following the intervention of the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs, the Cape Town Refugee Reception Office has enlisted the help of the National Immigration Branch of the Department of Home Affairs and asylum seeker applications are now being processed by the Barrack Street office in addition to the Refugee Reception Office. A number of organisations have expressed concern about this latest development with regards to its legality, sustainability and how well equipped Immigration officials are to conduct the necessary interviews.

This latest development initially saw large crowds gather outside the Refugee Reception Office on Monday 22nd October resulting in a chaotic situation with some violent altercations taking place. People Against Suffering Suppression Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP) is currently monitoring the situation and providing assistance with queue management. They report that around 100 newcomers are being assisted each day and that those first in the queue are being served.

Durban Refugee Reception Office

Reports from Durban indicate a new crisis at the Durban Refugee Reception Office. A shortage of staff appears to have resulted in very limited numbers of new comers being issued with Section 22 permits each day. This has come at a time when there appear to be increased numbers of Zimbabwean nationals applying for asylum at the facility and thus the system appears not to be coping with this situation. Concern has also been raised about the presence of agents outside the office who are suspected of soliciting bribes to fast track applications.

Human Trafficking

South Africa appears to be a prime destination for human trafficking. Human trafficking involves the violation of a person's civil rights through force, fraud or coerced labour resulting in a relationship of involuntary servitude or debt bondage. Victims of trafficking have usually been recruited through deception, coercion or abduction and moved from one place to another whether within a country or across borders for the purpose of exploitation. This thus involves a person being brought to South Africa with promises of lucrative employment but then being put to work in insecure conditions against their will. Internationally, people are trafficked for work in sweat shops, the sex trade, commercial agriculture, and domestic work. There is also trafficking for the purposes of organ removal, forced marriages, fake marriages, forced adoptions and forced labour.

Some of these issues were raised at a conference of the International Association of Women Judges earlier this month. Marie Martinez, a Victim-Witness Specialist of the US Department of Homeland Security also recently visited South Africa to conduct training on this issue. South Africa currently has no legislation dealing directly with the issue of human trafficking although the South African Law Reform Commission is working on the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Bill which will make human trafficking an offence in the country. Currently, those responsible for trafficking can face related charges such as kidnapping or racketeering yet such charges have their limitations.

There has been widespread concern about the trafficking of Mozambicans into South Africa. A study by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in 2003 found that more than 1 000 Mozambican women and children are trafficked into South Africa each year. The Mozambican Cabinet has recently approved a law against human trafficking which imposes lengthy sentences on those convicted of this offence.

Yet it is not just Mozambicans who are victims of trafficking. Other regions of origin include other SADC states, Eastern Europe and South East Asia. It appears also that people are being trafficked to other countries via South Africa. South Africans have also been the victims of trafficking being trafficked to countries in Europe and Asia amongst others.

So how does one recognise a victim of trafficking? Clues to instances of human trafficking can be found in the living and working conditions of the person, suspicions around physical or sexual abuse, the person being confined to a certain location or their movements being restricted in any way, their documents being held by another person, or the person repaying a debt to the person responsible for bringing them to the country.

If you do suspect that an individual is a victim of human trafficking, contact the IOM's Counter-Trafficking Helpline on 0800 555 999. The IOM's Southern African Counter-Trafficking Assistance Programme (SACTAP) is involved in victim assistance, capacity building, research and data collection as well as information and awareness raising. If you are interested in this area you can also sign up to their newsletter by emailing eye@iom.int.

Refugee Children's Manual

Refugee Children's Project (RCP) is currently working on a Children's Manual focusing on unaccompanied and refugee children in South Africa. The manual will serve as a reference guide for both refugee children and service providers on how to access services. There are sections detailing the processes involved in accessing various services such as applying for asylum, school enrolment, social services and many other topics. A workshop was held on 19th October 2007 to discuss the first draft of the manual.

The aim of this first workshop was to give the various stakeholders the opportunity to make their contributions on the first draft of the manual in terms of the layout and the content. This first workshop was a success in that it managed to draw from a wide range of expertise judging from the representatives who attended. RCP has committed itself to keeping stakeholders informed of all developments as the work progresses. The manual is to be launched on World Refugee Day in June 2008. For further information please contact the RCP on 011 333 9266.

Outreach

Johannesburg

Refugee Speak Out Event

The Refugee Speak Out event was a collaborative effort between Co-ordinating Body for Refugee Communities, Refugee Ministries and Sangoco. It was aimed to celebrate World Eradication of Poverty Day and refugee communities from the different corners of the African continent were represented. Refugees/asylum seekers and migrants shared their stories such as the anguishes they went through when they left home with a hope of finding peace in South Africa. However, many of them are yet to find that peace. After the event, various African cuisines were on offer much to the delight of the guests.

Anti-Xenophobia Activities

An anti-xenophobia training workshop was held by the City of Joburg (CoJ) Migrant Helpdesk. The target group was the CoJ's frontline staff. The workshop covered issues on applying for asylum and anti-xenophobia. This was a very interactive workshop and the participants were keen on learning more about non-nationals and how the greater South African community can benefit from their presence in South Africa. The workshop also highlighted some of the many challenges that still have to be overcome for the realisation of a truly non-discriminatory society.

Khanya College also held a strategic planning session to develop its anti-xenophobia campaign. Key issues included engaging the media, the police, tackling the situation at Lindela and spreading the campaign to schools, churches and the communities. Please contact Mhlobo on mhlobo.gunguluzi@khanyacollege.org.za.

Durban

The Mennonite Central Committee launched a DVD on World Refugee Day entitled *Live Here*. The DVD focuses on refugee youth living in South Africa. It documents the experiences they have gone through in the country from the time they arrived. The DVD can be a useful tool in outreach programmes. It will also be beneficial to both the South African and non-nationals communities as it showcases survival skills. For more information about the DVD, please contact Yasmin on 031 310 3578.

East London

The South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) recently conducted an outreach visit to East London where they were able to make a number of valuable contacts in relation to refugee and migration issues. There has been much recent concern about the general lack of capacity within the Eastern Cape in terms of providing services for migrants and refugees. SARCS was optimistic after the visit as some organisations appeared willing to assist refugees and migrants in the area but had not yet been called on to do so. CoRMSA will be following up on these issues with a site visit to East London.

Port Elizabeth

In response to the concerns around the lack of capacity for service provision for refugees and migrants in the Port Elizabeth area, CoRMSA will be meeting with local organisations in PE on 7th November. Those attending include representatives of the Black Sash, the PE Justice Centre, the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Law Clinic, the Legal Resources Centre and the Salvation Army. We have been very encouraged by the response from the organisations thus far as we seek to address these challenges. If anyone has any further contact with organisations in PE that it would be useful to invite to this meeting, please let us know.

Announcement

The partnership between Sacred Heart College, the Refugee Ministries Centre and the Coordinating Body of Refugee Communities (CBRC) are very pleased to announce the launching of the refugee-affiliated primary school in January 2008. The Sacred Heart College will host 6 class rooms with a maximum of 30 learners comprising of refugee children. These classrooms are inclusive of Grade 1 to 6.

Recruitment of learners will be based on the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) requirements coupled with the following:

- Currently not attending school
- Having the age required by the GDE
- Being an orphan
- Children of single parent (s)
- Children from very low income earning family
- Having a previous school report (not compulsory)
- An assessment test will be conducted during the selection process at Sacred Heart College.

Remember that this project aims at catering for the neediest among the asylum seekers/refugee communities. Parents of the applicants are requested to register their children at the CBRC Office located at 185 Smit Street, Auckland House, 11th Floor East Wing between 8: 30 to 16:00 from Monday to Friday starting from Monday 05 November 2007.

The closing date for applications is 30th November 2007 at 15:00.

Contributions

If you would like to write an article about an issue you or your organisation is dealing with, please email us and we will try to include it. Thank you for reading this and we look forward to your feedback.

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