



---

## CoRMSA NEWSLETTER

Edition 5 – 18<sup>th</sup> December 2007

### NEWS:

#### **Clashes in Mooiplaas**

On the night of Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December, clashes between South African and Zimbabwean nationals took place in Mooiplaas, south west of Pretoria. Individuals had been accused of crime and as a result retaliatory attacks took place resulting in over 100 shacks being burned. CoRMSA was able to work with the Red Cross, Oxfam, religious leaders and Mthwakazi Arts and Culture to arrange an intervention. A team from Red Cross's Pretoria and Gauteng regional offices visited the site to assess the situation and was able to arrange a community meeting to address the sources of conflict. Red Cross is currently monitoring the situation.

#### **Meeting with Representatives of the Marabastad Refugee Reception Office**

The Forced Migrants in the New Johannesburg Working Group meets once a month to discuss migration issues including challenges faced by refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Gauteng. As a result of the security concerns that a number of organisations have raised regarding the Marabastad Refugee Reception Office in Pretoria, a Security Task Team was formed to find ways of addressing these. CoRMSA as part of the task team facilitated a meeting with the Head of the Marabastad office. The meeting was held on 14<sup>th</sup> December. The task team was able to present the concerns that the working group has including security for asylum seekers while in the queue outside Marabastad and their being vulnerable to bandit activities, intake of new asylum seekers, staffing issues and access to services by those without permits.

The office was able to share with us some of the plans that they have implemented and their plans for the coming year. The office also introduced a new computer system as the old one was no longer coping. They are currently able to print about 198 asylum seeker permits per day. The security issues are being addressed with the SAPS and business leaders in a Sector Management Forum formed by DHA. The task team has been invited to attend these meetings whereupon we can raise our concerns.

The issue of the magumagumas (thugs or agents who intimidate asylum seekers outside the Refugee Reception Office) was discussed and suggestions were put forward on how to deal with these. This issue seems to be of paramount importance to different stakeholders including business as it has an impact on their operations. The working group will continue

engaging with this issue in the new year in a bid to get it addressed and in trying to facilitate safety for prospective asylum seekers.

A number of initiatives are currently underway to improve service delivery at the office. These include staff complement, refurbishing of the offices and a better queue management system. Follow-up will be done on the matters discussed to ensure that they are being addressed.

## **CoRMSA Training**

CoRMSA conducted a training session on Refugee Law in Grahamstown on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December. This session was attended by 26 paralegals from the Eastern Cape representing the Justice Centres of the Legal Aid Board, Black Sash, Legal Resources Centre and Rhodes Legal Aid Clinic. The training was well received and participants who are already engaged in refugee work had an opportunity to voice their concerns and share their challenges. The workshop dealt with service provision, the role to be played by paralegals and referral procedures among other issues. It also covered some aspects of the Immigration Act and arrest and detention issues. As a result of this training, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants can now access paralegal assistance in Aliwal North, Butterworth, East London, Graaff-Reinet, Grahamstown, King Williams Town, Mthatha, Port Elizabeth, Queenstown and Uitenhage.

## **New CoRMSA member**

Johannesburg-based NGO Christians for Peace in Africa has been granted associate membership of CoRMSA following the recent CoRMSA network meeting. Led by Pastor Thomas-Rene Kitutu, the organisation has been involved in promoting public education on the culture of peace in Africa reaching different communities especially children and the youth. We take this opportunity to welcome them and we look forward to working closely with them in the near future.

## **Living on the Fence – Refugee Women’s Poetry**

Women’s Writing Workshops has compiled a volume of refugee women’s poetry entitled *Living on the Fence*. The volume stems from writing workshops held by Anne Schuster with the Whole World Women Association in Cape Town. The poetry includes a very personal look at experiences of displacement and dislocation on an individual basis and short biographies of the authors are a welcome addition to the book. For more information or a copy of the book, please visit [www.anneschuster.co.za](http://www.anneschuster.co.za).

## **New Zimbabwean Torture and Human Rights Abuses Report Released**

The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, the Open Society Institute, and the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture have just released a new report entitled *We have Degrees in Violence: A Report on Torture and Human Rights Abuses in Zimbabwe*. The report details state-sanctioned political violence and examines evidence suggesting that the Zimbabwean government is using torture and violence as a means of deterring political opposition. The report can be downloaded from [http://www.survivorsoftorture.org/pix/zimb\\_report1207.pdf](http://www.survivorsoftorture.org/pix/zimb_report1207.pdf).

## Maths, Science and Accounting Teaching Initiative

Africa Unite, a Cape Town based NGO, has launched a Maths and Science project based at Dr Nelson Mandela High School in Crossroads to assist with the training of higher numbers of artisans, engineers and accountants of colour in South Africa. Learners for the programme are drawn from the townships of Gugulethu, Nyanga, Phillipi and Crossroads and from different schools such as Eisleben, Mandela, Vuyiseka and Comprehensive High Schools.

Utilising qualified teachers from the refugee and migrant communities who provide their services on a voluntary basis, this programme also aims to challenge stigma attached to non-nationals by emphasising the benefits of the skills non-nationals can share. Teachers thus teach Maths, Science and Accounting to mitigate the challenges posed by the shortages of qualified South African teachers in these subjects.

Learners are also provided with access to laboratories at sites such as Stellenbosch University and the MTN Science Centre as many of the schools do not have such facilities. Although initially only targeting Grade 12 learners, the project has now been extended to encompass Grade 10 learners for the sake of providing continuity. For more information contact Zoe Nkongolo at [zoe@idasa.org.za](mailto:zoe@idasa.org.za).

## Bursary Applications

*H.J. Heinz Company Foundation Fellowship 2008-09 - Application Deadline: 3 March 2008*

The Global Studies Programme of the University Centre for International Studies at the University of Pittsburgh requests applications for the H. J. Heinz Company Foundation Fellowship Programme. The programme runs from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2009. The Fellowship provides for one year of practical, professional, non-degree educational experiences through the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, USA. Heinz Fellowships are granted to individuals from developing countries who have already demonstrated potential as future leaders in the government, non-profit or private sectors. For more information, go to <http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/global/heinz/index.html>

## *Graça Machel Scholarships Programme*

The Graça Machel Scholarships Programme targets women as a means of addressing gender inequality and eradicating poverty with the broader goal of helping to provide the human resources necessary for economic, social and cultural development in the southern African region.

The Graça Machel Scholarships Programme will provide a minimum of 60 postgraduate scholarships to female students from **Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa** in both South Africa and the UK. **Unfortunately the deadline for applications for study in South Africa has passed but applications could still be made for study in the UK. The deadline for applications is 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.** Further details on the attachments sent with this newsletter.

## **Office Closure**

CoRMSA will be closing its office on 20<sup>th</sup> December and reopening on 4<sup>th</sup> January. We wish all organisations and individuals a happy festive period and congratulate all on their achievements over the past year.