

# UNHCR NEWSLETTER

## Separated Children in Europe Programme

### October - November 2001

#### Issue N°7

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year*

#### Inside this issue:

- News on Separated Children
- Study
- European Asylum Harmonisation
- Meeting/Event
- Publications and Web-sites
- Programme Update
- Calendar

\*\*\*This summary has been prepared from publicly available sources. It does not necessarily reflect UNHCR's views, nor can UNHCR vouch for its accuracy.

### **News on Separated Children**

**United Kingdom: REFUGEES FAILED BY UK SYSTEM.** Afghan children who fled to Britain to escape joining the Taleban army are being overlooked and left to fend for themselves, according to a new report. They are being dumped in bed and breakfast accommodation with little support, the study says. The report published by the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering says that many of the 6,000 separated children in the UK are abandoned at places such as train stations and told simply to approach the authorities to claim asylum. Its author, Selam Kidane, said the children were being let down by the care system. Some were housed in bed and breakfast hostels, while others received foster care. She found that children were not attending school and that local authorities were often not carrying out compulsory assessments of their emotional, cultural and linguistic needs. In August this year, a study by the Refugee Council made similar

discoveries.(BBC) *The Refugee Daily*, 16 November 01

*For more information please contact Emma Charvet or Maxine Vernon in the BAAF Press Office - 020 7593 2038 or 07767 444589.*

**The Netherlands: RETURN OF SEPARATED CHILDREN.** In order to prepare separated children seeking asylum for their eventual return, a school in the northern town of Winschoten has started to give "return courses" to children in reception centres. The lessons are in English instead of Dutch and are teaching children skills and knowledge appropriate in the country of return. As many of these children are still in the asylum procedure (albeit with a slim chance of being recognised as refugees), the motivation to follow the lessons is very low. The number of drop-outs is higher than for the normal Dutch lessons for separated children, where there is already a problem of low attendency. The pilot project in Winschoten is the only one in the country and will be continued for a few months. It is expected that the Government will have to organize this type of preparation for return in light of a new policy to return

rejected children. *Dutch TV news*, 20 November 2001

**France: ALTERNATIVES TO AIRPORT WAITING ZONE FOR SEPARATED CHILDREN.**

The French magazine *Marie-Claire* dedicated a long article to the critical state of separated children in Roissy Airport's waiting zone. It highlights two initiatives which aim at improving this situation. One is managed by the NGO *France Terre d'Asile (FTD)*. In 1999, FTD created "Caomida" a reception centre for separated children at Boissy-Saint-Léger. This centre provides accommodation in the Parisian suburbs for 35 minors during an average of nine months. The other initiative comes from the government, which finances a reception center for separated children managed by the Red Cross. The center, located in Taverny (Val-d'Oise) aims at welcoming children and at orientating them during their stay in France. Separated children arriving in waiting zones are placed there following the decision of a judge for a period of two months. The managers of the center hope to reduce separated children's disappearance by giving them better assistance and to find a long-term solution during their stay in Taverny. *Marie Claire* September 2001.

**USA: THE LOST BOYS-INTEGRATING IN THE US.**

Fourteen years ago a large group of Sudanese separated children many of whom had been child soldiers, fled from the civil war in their country. They spent the first 4 years in refugee camps in Ethiopia. 25 000 of them died on the way back to South Sudan. 12 000 of them continued their trip to Kenya, where they arrived in 1992. They built their own villages in the refugee camps of Kakuma. UNHCR and The United States have worked out an agreement for 3300 of these so-called « lost-boys » to resettle in the United States. Despite the culture shock social assistants are surprised at their motivation and capability to adapt. Frederick Ombongi, social assistant from Catholic Human Development Outreach in Grand Rapids is responsible for 63 boys. All of them go to school, 25 of them to university, and all but 8, have an after-school job. "The Lost Boys" also include some girls. The reason why there are only a couple of hundred "Lost Girls" is because many of them have been married off. Just like the boys, the girls love to

go to school, a chance they would never have had if they had stayed in Kenya, in the refugee camps. *From NRC Handelsblad, Refugee Daily* 8 November

**Burundi: Hutu rebels abducted 107 Burundian children from refugee border camps in Tanzania and only two of them escaped,**

the UN Children's Fund, UNICEF, said Tuesday 13 November. The kidnappings were in addition to the reported abduction last week of about 200 children aged 10 to 13 from three schools in eastern Burundi, the agency said. "The reports are that Hutu rebels started a campaign a week ago, they burned two schools and health centres, and started to abduct children," said UNICEF spokeswoman Wivina Belmonte. In one school, rebels abducted 21 students and four teachers. One child and all four teachers managed to escape, but 16 other children are still missing, Belmonte said. UNICEF estimates that over the past few days the number of internally displaced people in the region had increased by 2,426. 1,780 of them are children and 150 of the children are separated. *Refugee Daily*, 14 November.

**Canada: ROUNDTABLE ON SEPARATED CHILDREN.**

On 15-16 October, UNHCR Ottawa, the Child Welfare League of Canada and International Social Service Canada co-sponsored a National Roundtable on separated children seeking asylum in Canada. The Roundtable brought together 35 immigration officials, child welfare professionals and refugee advocates. It was held under the patronage of Canada's Senator for Children and Youth, Senator Landon Pearson, who attended the meeting. The objectives of the meeting were :

- to bring the immigration authorities and the child welfare community together to discuss the issue of separated children ;
- to raise awareness and profile of the issue of separated asylum-seeking children in Canada ;
- to spur the federal and provincial governments to take action to address some of the most acute protection gaps for these children.

Main topics discussed were :

- the principle of the best interest of the child in the context of separated children seeking asylum ;

- Canadian practice with respect to identification referral to care and guardianship ;
- detention ;
- the Immigration and Refugee Board proceedings and the role of the Designated Representative ;
- Return of separated children to their country of origin.

*UNHCR Ottawa, 17 October 2001.*

**Croatia: ROUNDTABLE ON SEPARATED CHILDREN.** A Round Table on separated children seeking asylum in Croatia was organised by UNHCR and the Centre for Social Policy Initiatives on 29-30 October 2001 in Opatija, Croatia. The 22 participants represented various ministries, NGOs and UNHCR. Main points of discussions were the current situation of separated children in Croatia, identifying main protection concerns and actions to be taken.

A Coordination Group on separated children has been established to follow up on the recommendations from the Roundtable. It will include representatives of the relevant ministries, NGOs, UNHCR and UNICEF.

*UNHCR Zagreb*

**Council of Europe: STRENGTHENING PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.**

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has adopted a recommendation aimed at strengthening the protection of children against sexual exploitation. The recommendation calls on the 43 member States of the pan-European organisation to co-ordinate and step up their actions to combat more effectively all forms of pornography, prostitution, slavery and trafficking of which children may be the victims. *Strasbourg, 08/11/2001 (Agence Europe) The text is available on: www.cm.coe.int.*

---

**Study**

**DETENTION:** Detention of separated children seeking asylum is of serious concern in several European Countries and North

America, especially in the USA where separated children are detained systematically. Yet such detention is increasingly common practice, with some governments detaining asylum-seekers, including children, in prison-like conditions or indeed in jails. In Canada, the Minister of Immigration has announced new measures to simplify the detention of asylum-seekers, while in the US, proposed laws aimed at suspected terrorists may also result in the increased detention of refugees. European states are also contemplating additional provisions allowing the detention of non-citizens.

It is in this context that the Center for Refugee Studies at York University in Canada sees a pressing need for critical reflection and constructive discussion on the issue of detention. They are therefore inviting contributions to an upcoming issue of their publication « Refuge », which is dedicated to examining this theme. « Refuge » particularly invites submissions on topics including but not limited to: detention under international law; comparative or historical case studies of detention policy among refugee-receiving countries; the detention of particularly vulnerable populations including single women, children, and the elderly; detention as an element of securing state sovereignty; and moral /ethical reflections on detention.

*Guest editor: Eleanor Acer*

*Deadline for Submissions: February 15, 2002*

*For more information, please contact:*

*Lene Madsen,*

*Managing Editor, Refuge Centre for Refugee Studies, York Lanes, Suite 322,*

*York University, 4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3*

*Email: refuge@yorku.ca*

---

**European Asylum Harmonisation**

**UNHCR AND SAVE THE CHILDREN COMMENTS ON EU DRAFT DIRECTIVES.** UNHCR has provided official comments on the draft directives on asylum procedure, refugee definition, family reunification, reception and on the working paper revisiting the Dublin Convention, which all make reference to separated children.

To get a copy please contact Johannes Van der Klauuw, [Vanderkl@unhcr.ch](mailto:Vanderkl@unhcr.ch) or Annabelle Roig, UNHCR Brussels, E-mail: [Roig@unhcr.ch](mailto:Roig@unhcr.ch),

Save the Children has made comments on the following EU draft Directives: reception, asylum procedures and the right to family reunification. *These comments are available on :[www.savethechildren.net/brussels/index.html](http://www.savethechildren.net/brussels/index.html)*

**Brussels: THE EU MINISTERS OF CHILDHOOD WANT SPECIAL ATTENTION PAID TO SITUATION AND RIGHTS OF CHILDREN.** At a meeting in Brussels on 9 November, under the chairmanship of Jean-Marc Nollet, Minister for childhood of the French speaking Community of Belgium, the European Ministers for Childhood took four decisions unanimously, essentially to make childhood a major political concern.

1. In preparation for the UN special session on children (9/10 May 2002 in New York) the ministers reiterated their appeal for all countries participating in the Summit to implement without delay the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) relating to Children's Rights and its optional protocols concerning, on the one hand, children's participation in armed conflicts, and, on the other, trafficking in children, child prostitution and pornography.
2. The ministers urged the European Union to pay special attention to the situation of children, their future and the respect of their rights as defined by the Convention. They also stressed the validity of taking specific account of childhood in national action plans implemented in Member States, notably those on employment and the fight against social exclusion. Among other things, they urged the Justice and Home Affairs Council on issues related to asylum and immigration.
3. The question of the responsibility for the management of the network was raised. While awaiting the next ministerial meeting, it was decided that the Belgian Presidency, then the Spanish one would manage the network until otherwise decided.
4. Given the good practices exchanged at national and international levels, the

ministers launched an appeal to European authorities (Council, Commission, Parliament) to study arrangements for a possible participation of children in the decision-making process at EU level. *Brussels, 12/11/2001 (Agence Europe) -*

---

## Meeting/Event

-The Belgian NGO Platform "Mineurs en exil" will hold its 3<sup>rd</sup> plenary meeting in Brussels on Friday 14 December. For information, please contact *Service droit des jeunes*, [sdjbxl@skynet.be](mailto:sdjbxl@skynet.be)

-Convention On The Rights Of The Child: The Optional Protocol of the CRC on Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography will enter into force on 18 January 2002, following ratification of the protocol by Romania on 18 October. The Optional Protocol is now ratified by Andorra, Bangladesh, Cuba, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Norway, Panama, Romania, Sierra Leone. States Parties will be required to prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography as provided for by the Protocol.

To view status of ratification, go to: [www.unhcr.ch/pdf/report.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/pdf/report.pdf)

To view Declarations and Reservations go to: <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/treaty18.htm>

---

## Publications and Web-sites

-UNHCR Statistical Unit and the SCEP produced a Statistical overview on separated children / unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Europe in 2000. This report can be downloaded from [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch) or [www.sce.gla.ac.uk](http://www.sce.gla.ac.uk)

-The SCEP report entitled "The Situation of Separated Children in Central Europe and the Baltic States" has been finalised. It can be downloaded from [www.sce.gla.ac.uk](http://www.sce.gla.ac.uk)

-The SCEP Training Guide and the SCEP Lobby Guide have been finalised. These two publications are available on [www.sce.gla.ac.uk](http://www.sce.gla.ac.uk)

**-Guidelines for Interviewing Separated Children.** Finnish Directorate of Immigration, November 2001. These Guidelines include themes on communication issues, memory systems, how to meet and interview traumatised children, arrangements prior to the interviews, and topics for questions. To get a copy of this document please contact [kielo.brewis@uvi.fi](mailto:kielo.brewis@uvi.fi), Finnish Directorate of Immigration, Siltasaarekatu 12A, 00530 Helsinki Finland, Tel: +358 9 4765 5735, Fax:+358 9 47 65 5858.

**-Beyond the Pale:** Asylum-Seeking Children and Social Exclusion in Ireland, Dr. Brian Fanning, Dr. Angela Veale and Dawn O'Connor. Irish Refugee Council, July 2001, Dublin. The report examines experiences of child poverty and social exclusion amongst asylum seekers in Ireland. The report can be found at : <http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/pub01/beyondthepalerep.html>

**-Save the Children Publications catalogue on line.** The reports and books offer are for people working first-hand with the rights of children or for those of you who are interested in the work being done to realize the Convention. Some of the books are of a more general nature not directly related to field work or the Convention, but more relevant to those who work with children, such as teachers, youth counselors or even parents. <http://www.rb.se/bookshop/>.

**-Isoliert und am Rande der Gesellschaft – Perspektive ungewiss !**  
Die Situation junger Flüchtlinge,  
This position paper published by the German Social and youth Welfare Service highlights the situation of separated children seeking asylum in Germany. Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft, Kennedyallee 105-107, 53175 Bonn, Jugendsozialarbeit , Tel: +02 28/95 96 8-0

**-Sexual and Gender Based Violence.** The Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium has posted a comprehensive bibliography on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) at [www.rhrc.org/tech/sgbv/bib](http://www.rhrc.org/tech/sgbv/bib)

**- Training Guide. The Psychosocial Rehabilitation Of Children Who Have Been Commercially Sexually Exploited.** Delaney,

Stephanie and Cotterill, Colin. The chapters of this Guide include themes on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), what it means & who is affected; Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), what it means and who is affected; the special needs of commercially sexually exploited children; understanding behaviour and developing strategies to manage bad behaviour & encourage good behaviour. To view the publication online in pdf format go to:

[http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat\\_inter/Publication/Other/English/Pdf\\_page/ecpat\\_training\\_manual.pdf](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/Publication/Other/English/Pdf_page/ecpat_training_manual.pdf)  
*Information from CRIN mail.*

---

## Programme Update

-17 Oct.The Separated Children in Europe Programme steering committee members met in Bratislava, Slovakia.

-18 Oct.UNHCR Separated Children in Europe Programme focal points met in Bratislava prior to the Programme Seminar.

-19-20 Oct.The SCE Programme Seminar was organised in Bratislava. UNHCR and NGO focal points of 28 countries covered by the SCE Programme participated. The agenda included a presentation of report on the situation of separated children in Central Europe and the Baltic States, workshops on age assessment with focus on 'informal survey', refugee status determination with focus on the various legal statuses and child-specific forms of human rights violations, reception with focus on detention and disappearance and trafficking including concerns of non-asylum seeking children. Discussions were made on the future of the SCE Programme. Reports will follow.

-23 Oct.The Senior Policy Officer was invited to present UNHCR policy on refugee children during a seminar on humanitarian aid, university of Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.

-25-26 Oct.The Senior Policy Officer and Programme Assistant participated in a conference on child soldiers entitled "*Child Soldiers: A Co-operative approach to defining good practice*" held in Brussels. This event was organised in the framework of the Belgian Presidency of the European Union by Save the Children, the Voluntary Organisation in Co-operation in Emergency (VOICE) and the European Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO).

Representatives of the Belgian Government, the Red Cross, UNICEF, VOICE, Save the Children Fund (UK), ECHO and a number of NGOs participated.

-28-30 Oct. The Senior Policy Officer went to Croatia, to make a presentation and co-facilitate a Round Table on separated children in Croatia. See above.

-12 November, the Senior Policy Officer was invited by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry to present progress achieved by the SCEP and to discuss the Norwegian MFA future involvement in the Programme.

Catherine Joppart, Programme Assistant  
[Joppart@unhcr.ch](mailto:Joppart@unhcr.ch); tel: +32 2 627 17 58

UNHCR RO Brussels  
Rue Van Eyck 11b  
1050 Brussels, Belgium

---

## Calendar

-28-30 November, a Training of Trainers on the issue of separated children seeking asylum in Europe will be organised in Bucharest, Romania for Government, NGO and UNHCR staff members.

-10-14 December, the Senior Policy Officer will participate in a series of meetings for Senior Regional Advisers for refugee children in UNHCR, Geneva.

-The UNHCR Programme Assistant, Catherine Joppart will be replaced by Mafalda Marinho Leal, who will start on the first week of January 2002.

---

This Newsletter has been produced by Kate Halvorsen and Catherine Joppart for the Separated Children in Europe Programme. For more information please contact:

Kate Halvorsen, Senior Policy Officer  
[Halvorse@unhcr.ch](mailto:Halvorse@unhcr.ch); tel:+ 32 2 627 17 59