

AWARE that the special problems of refugee and displaced women have to date not been fully studied,

In the past, women have primarily been assisted as part of the group; only in certain cases were special provisions made to meet their particular needs. It is clear, however, that meeting those needs now necessitates a specifically targeted approach if women are to receive fair and equal treatment. The strength and resilience demonstrated by women refugees in most desperate situations are features that should not be overlooked or minimized. While the father is frequently incapable of assuming sole responsibility for the family, families headed by women have a remarkable capacity to survive as a unit. Because of the central role played by refugee women in their families, it is essential for the international community to take all necessary measures to help them recover their self-esteem and status in the family and in the social group.

STRONGLY EMPHASIZING the need for increased support from the international community for the large number of refugees and displaced persons,

1. REQUESTS all States to co-operate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in order to assure full protection of the well-being of women and children in particular, in accordance with their legal rights under international law and national legislation;

2. CALLS UPON all States and aid-donors providing immediate relief to refugees and displaced persons to endeavour to lessen the special vulnerability of women in these circumstances, by ensuring their access to emergency relief and to health programs, and their active participation in decision-making in centres or camps for refugees or displaced persons;

3. URGES the international community to provide urgent and adequate assistance to all refugee and displaced women and to developing countries providing asylum or rehabilitation, especially the least developed and most seriously affected countries;

4. FURTHER CALLS UPON all States and aid-donors assisting in the rehabilitation, resettlement or repatriation of refugees and displaced persons to rec-

ognize the pivotal role of the mother in the family, and thus in the provision of family welfare, to ensure women's rights to physical safety and to facilitate their access to counselling services and material assistance;

5. URGES the High Commissioner to work with host country governments to encourage the participation of women, including refugee women, in the administration of refugee assistance programs, notably the provision of essential food, shelter and medical services in asylum countries and to promote their participation in training and orientation programs in asylum and resettlement countries;

6. URGES the High Commissioner to draw upon the expertise of all concerned United Nations bodies and, in consultation with concerned countries, to carry out detailed studies and research to determine the extent to which refugee and displaced women are especially vulnerable and to formulate and implement programs and projects based upon the results of these studies;

7. RECOMMENDS that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees co-ordinate with the interested United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations the collection and analysis of data and the conduct of research and case studies on the critical needs of refugee and displaced women;

8. FURTHER RECOMMENDS that the High Commissioner ensure that the number of women at all levels on his staff, and particularly in the field, is increased and that a high-level staff position is designated as a co-ordinator for women's programs.

The High Commissioner for Refugees has taken action which reflects his deep concern for the situation of refugee women around the world. He continues to co-operate fully with member states to ensure the international protection and welfare of all refugees, with special emphasis for the particular needs of women refugees and children.

In addition, the High Commissioner has consulted with and worked alongside those interested United Nations agencies

and non-governmental organizations to formulate and implement assistance programs taking into consideration the specific needs of refugee women.

The High Commissioner has made efforts to increase the number of women at all levels on his staff and has designated a staff position as co-ordinator for women's programs.

*Taken from a UNHCR report "The Situation of Refugee Women the World Over" and a resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its 35th Session, 11 December 1980.

SUDHA COOMARASAMY

Seeking Refuge ...

I want to fly
but have no wings.
I want to build
a cosy nest — all my own
but do not have
even dried up sticks.
My life melts away
in dependence and obligation.
Every kind deed —
reminds me of my stateless state.
I seek refuge from —
being a refugee.

(December 1985, London, U.K.)

Ingratitude?

I know what animals feel like
that have freely roamed the forest.
Food may have been scarce —
forest fire, flood and drought
may have daily threatened their lives,
but, they breathed the air of freedom.

The animal lovers redeemed us,
from uncertainties and,
the violence of the forest.
But now —
We pace within 6' X 10' rooms,
wait for our regulated feed times,
and time-tables fresh air quotas.

These humans are so organized
that every flap of wings or wag of tail
is computerized.
Instead of instinct, now machines
dictate
their every minute action.

(London, U.K., March 1986)