

# The Women's Foreign Policy Group

Ellen Sauerbrey  
U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for  
Population, Refugees, and Migration

“The US Role in the Protection of  
Refugee and Displaced Women and Girls”

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**MS. ELLIS:**

Good evening, everyone, and welcome to our members, guests, friends. We're really pleased that you could all come especially on this really cold night, and we're just excited about our program this evening.

I'm Patricia Ellis, President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. What we're all about for of those who don't know us, we promote global engagement and women's leadership and women's voices on the pressing international issues of the day. We're known for our in-depth international issues programs. This is one of them, like our program tonight, with Ellen Sauerbrey. We're so pleased that she could come up from Washington. She is the Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, PRM, for those of you into acronyms, and she will speak about the U.S. role in the protection of refugees and displaced women and girls.

We are really excited about having the Secretary up here tonight because we wanted to bring a little bit of Washington to New York and vice versa, mix it up. We really have a nice dialogue that is just not the usual things, so we're just excited and the issues that are important and we have a great group. A special welcome to our co-sponsors for tonight, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, and many thanks to all of you, the commissioners and especially to the Executive Director, Carolyn Makinson, and all the board members for co-sponsoring this.

I thought this was the first time we had co-sponsored an event, but actually it's not. We co-sponsored an event quite a number of years ago with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf when she was living and working in New York, and that was very exciting. And the other connection we have is Catherine O'Neill, and Beverly Bruce. Catherine is a dear friend, and both Catherine and Beverly served on the Women's Foreign Policy Group Board, and Catherine is the founder of this organization.

I just wanted to thank the staff of the Women's Commission and my staff that worked so hard to pull this all together, and also we wanted to thank the Orrick Law Firm for having us here, hosting this, providing wonderful space and all their support. We really appreciate it. So before I introduce our moderator, Dawn Calabria, I would just like to recognize some of our diplomatic colleagues who are here. So we have the Austrian Consul General. Thank you for coming. And we have representative of the Indonesian consulate. Thank you so much for joining us.

Now it's my privilege to introduce our moderator who is seated right over there; someone who a lot of

you know. She happens to be my colleague and friend, Dawn Calabia. She's an officer of the Women's Foreign Policy Group and also a founding member of the Women's Commission. She spent many years, over ten, at the U.N. as Deputy Director of the U.N. Information Centre in Washington. She was Senior Government and NGO Relations Officer for UNHCR, directed refugee policy at U.S. Catholic Conference, and when I first met Dawn she was working on Capitol Hill for a well-known New York representative no longer in Congress, and also working on the International Relations Committee. So please join me in welcoming Dawn Calabia.

**MS. CALABIA:**

Thank you very much, Pat, and thank you all for coming this evening. And, in particular, to the Assistant Secretary for her willingness to come up after spending a very busy week last week testifying on Capitol Hill and getting ready for her trip, which I think she'll tell us about.

Ellen Sauerbrey is a remarkable woman. I grew up in a generation where women were still supposed to stay in the kitchen, and Ellen Sauerbrey has never believed it. She is a Marylander, as I am a Marylander now, but she is a native Marylander. She was an educator. She was a school teacher. She was a legislator. She was in the assembly and served on the Appropriations Committee. And those of us who worry about all of the issues of the world know the Appropriations Committee is where the rubber hits the road, as we say. She was a candidate for governor two times in the state of Maryland; no small feat to undertake a role like that. She's been a diplomat. She was the U.S. Representative at the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations for the United States before assuming her present role as the Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Now that's a really big title, because it's a really big job. She has a budget that some years has been as high as \$950 million. She has the staff of probably over a hundred that she has got to worry about. But she's got the voice for voiceless inside a large government and inside a large bureaucracy that has lots and lots of interests. And of course the interest that has driven us all here tonight is the issue of the refugees, the internally displaced, the people who are suffering, and the consequences of war and persecution, and Ellen Sauerbrey is asked to be the voice of those people to the Office of Management and Budget, which decides about budgets, to the Secretary of State, to U.S. Representatives at various international organizations around the world, and to try to make the protection and safety of refugees, particularly the most vulnerable refugees—women and children and the disabled—a matter of U.S. policy and U.S. priority. That is not an easy job.

She's a woman I've heard from colleagues that is a quick study. She gets the facts, she listens, and then she moves ahead. She's representing the U.S. and international forums around the world, in Geneva with the U.N. agencies, in particular UNHCR, in trying to push U.S. concerns and also to make sure that the U.S. funding that goes to these organizations is well spent. In my view, the only thing wrong with that funding is it's too little and it's often too late. Ellen was up just last week with the hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee talking about refugee policy and what is happening in Iraq. It's a major crisis and she had to say that the budget that she had in front of her, which had been approved some time ago, was not adequate to deal with the size of the issue. We're estimating there may be as many as 1.4 million refugees from Iraq in the surrounding countries, many of whom have exhausted their own resources.

She also has to worry about refugee women and children, the trauma they've been through, that women need parenting skills, that they need hope for the future, that they need livelihoods, and that their children desperately need access to education and a road to the future. So she has a big role to play in the U.S. government. She has a tremendous role to play right now when budgets are very, very tight, when the war in Iraq is consuming a substantial amount of resources, and tax payers are not so willing to spend.

On the other hand, the U.S. has been the leader in the international community in terms of humanitarian assistance to UNHCR, to the World Food Program, to the U.N. Development Program, and particularly to UNICEF.

We're delighted to have her here with us tonight to tell us about some of the challenges that she's facing, but also what we can do to help her and to make sure that the cause that brought all of us here tonight: the protection of refugee women and children, refugees that are internally displaced, returnees who go home often to absolutely nothing, and if you've been in southern Sudan that's what they're going home to, absolutely nothing. So I want to thank her very much for being willing to come here tonight and for her efforts and to encourage and to keep fighting to make sure that her voice is heard inside the government and outside. Thank you, Ellen.

**MS. SAUERBREY:**

Dawn, thank you for that most generous introduction. I really just want to thank both of these very distinguished organizations for hosting this event and giving me the opportunity to be in a room full of, I'll say junkies, who follow these issues of women and children and global, international affairs as you do. I don't always get that opportunity and I'm really pleased to have the chance to be with you tonight, and I have great respect for your organizations and for the attempt that you make through your organizations, Pat, Caroline, Dawn, to give women an opportunity to have a voice.

It's kind of fun to be back in New York. I spent a lot of time here when I was the ambassador for the U.S. at the U.N. for women's issues at the Commission on the Status of Women, and there were a lot of frustrations, but we also had a couple of real accomplishments. We passed a very important resolution with 110 co-sponsors on women and political participation, and the U.S. led a fight to get a resolution passed on trafficking that for the first time focused on the demand side of trafficking, and I think we all ought to be able to recognize that if there aren't people that are buying then you wouldn't have women and children being sold.

I want to tell you that I love my job. I really love my job. I've had the opportunity to do a lot of things but this has got to be the best one I've ever had. And it's the best one I've ever had because how many things can you do where everyday when you come to work you know that you're saving lives. You're keeping hope alive in the hearts of many people. And every now and then I have an experience like I did, I just spoke in Dallas, and on the way in from the airport the van driver said, "I am from Iran." And I said, "Oh" and he started to tell me about being from Iran, and he had left Iran and he had gone to Turkey, and he had come to the U.S. And I said, "Were you by any chance a refugee?" And certainly he was a refugee and he spent the rest of the 20 minutes or so on the way from the airport to the hotel extolling how wonderful it was and that he was able to start a new life in the United States, and these are the kind of wonderful stories. I'll tell you some as I get in to my conversation.

It's really a good day when I have the opportunity to see that our programs are working and know that because of our efforts a former trafficking victim in the Dominican Republic has been sheltered and supported and succeeds now in running an independent business, and this a true story of a trafficking victim who is now, because of a U.S. funded program, able to set up a small stall in front of a maternity hospital where she sells baby clothes, and she's supporting her family. A woman who had been defenseless in the face of domestic violence and abuse and now given the tools through a legal program that we fund to courageously bring charges against the abuser, win the case, and begin to break down that culture of impunity that exists. Or when I meet former refugees who had been persecuted, traumatized, and had no hope and now, thanks to our refugee admissions program, they are proudly self-sufficient and contributing members of our society. This is one of the most exciting things that I get to see.

There also are challenging and tough days, like the days when we hear about the latest set back in the Sudan, like the recent brutal attacks that we've just experienced on international aid workers. We find that Kenya has closed its borders to Somali refugees or asylum seekers. Or when we learn about the persistent exploitation of refugee women and girls by the very people who are supposed to be protecting them. These are the days that also remind me of how important the work is that we do.

I'm going to ask you for just a minute to put yourselves in the shoes of a refugee. You've escaped alive. Your life will never be what it was before, but your life will continue. You can't go back. You can't go back to the place where they denied you your rights, where they took your possessions, where they may hurt you or your family. They may kill you because of who you are, because of your race, because of your religion, because of a social group, or your political views, your ethnic background. You are among the millions. If you count those protected by UNHCR as well as those protected by UNRA, about 14 million people in the world today who are in this situation.

You may be villagers driven out by the oppressive military; the religious minorities of Iran, the victims of violence in Darfur; the North Koreans that are subject to imprisonment or torture for the crime of seeking a better life. You may be one of the Nepalese that were expelled from Bhutan in an act of ethnic cleansing. You may be an Iraqi who has fled to Jordan because of the generalized sectarian violence in your country.

So now you find yourself in a camp or a shelter. You're subject to the good graces of your hosts. You're waiting for the day when maybe you can begin again. If things change back home and you have a chance to go home. If you're offered a permanent refuge in the country in which you have sought first asylum, or if you're resettled to another country. And as a woman you have particular problems because of your likelihood of being exploited, because you are, probably as a refugee woman, alone, trying to feed your children, having to expose yourself to danger just for the sake of gathering food or collecting fresh water.

Refugees are entitled to protection under the U.N. Convention on Refugees and other instruments that the United States strongly supports. The Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, which has the international mandate to protect refugees, is also increasingly becoming involved in the protection of internally displaced persons. And the difference between internally displaced persons and refugees, their situation is basically the same but the refugee has crossed an international border where the internally displaced person who has had to flee for many of the same reasons is still within their own country.

We found other international organizations and NGOs that serve refugees and displaced persons as you all know. We're very active in setting policy within the organizations particularly the international organizations which we give a lot of money to and we monitor the work that they do very closely. I talk very, very frequently to high commissioner Gutierrez and we have a very good working relationship. I have to say I've been really pleased with the high commissioner because he is very responsive to the things that we as a large donor country ask of UNHCR.

The special needs of women and girls among refugees and the displaced are a really high priority with my office and it's partly because women and children make up the majority of these displaced populations, but it's also because women and children are the most vulnerable when they are in refugee or conflict situations. These situations impact most heavily on women. Our protection priorities for women and girls are life sustaining nourishment, clean water, sanitation, health care, preventing and responding to violence and exploitation, and empowering women and girls through education and

livelihoods.

When I came into my position and was asked what are your priorities, the three priorities that I immediately cited were: let's do more for gender based violence, to prevent gender based violence; let's do more to provide education for women and girls; and let's ensure that they have skills training and are able at some point to make a new life. So a major focus for us is now addressing gender-based violence, the rape, abuse and sexual exploitation that compounds the suffering that women, as refugees, already are experiencing.

Since 2000 we have spent, my bureau alone, over \$14.7 million specifically for gender-based violence programs, \$4 million last year alone. We work through international organizations and through NGOs. IRC has been a particular partner in this area. Our programs are trying to break the cycle of gender-based violence by raising awareness, by challenging the complacency that exists about this issue by responding to the medical, social, and legal needs of the survivors and by strengthening the responses of the community. Our awareness-raising projects are aimed at the refugee communities themselves, but we also educate the police, the guards, the community workers on the impact of gender-based violence and about legal protection and services that are available to help.

We support literacy and education initiatives for refugee women as well as activities, as I said, to increase their income potential through livelihoods and marketable job skills training. Just to give you a little bit of a flavor of the range of these kinds of programs, in some of my own travels in Kakuma Camp in Kenya, I was able to see young girls in school, tiny girls in equal numbers to boys in the classrooms, but I was also saddened to see that as you got into the higher grades, the girls disappeared. I saw a lot of focus in Kakuma Camp on trying to raise this awareness of the gender-based violence issue. And IRC has been a major leader in this, and I really salute this organization.

Go through Kakuma Camp and you see big signs everywhere. You see people wearing T-shirts focusing on the rights of women not to be exploited. You see an NGO called Film Aid that has actually made almost like public service announcement little programs, eight, ten minutes long, using refugees as the actors, demonstrating that women do not have to pay with their bodies to get food or for other services. And this was a program I was really fascinated with because what Film Aid does is they have a big outdoor movie screen on a truck, and they take the truck to different parts of the camp. And in the camp, on any given night in the camp, they will draw maybe 1,000 people, and many, many small children will come. And they start off with a Tweety Bird cartoon. And it was kind of fun to be sitting out in a camp in Africa and have these little kids saying, "I tawt I taw a Tweety Bird." And then they show the public service announcement kind of thing that they have filmed themselves. And they're training people in how to be film makers at the same time because the refugees make the film on gender-based violence. And then they show a regular movie.

It is amazing how this has created a whole mental attitude that, when I met with the refugee women's group and asked them what their plans were for the future, many of them said they want to go home to southern Sudan, but one of the things they're very afraid of is whether when they go home to southern Sudan that culture that has been created of women's rights not to be exploited is going to carry across the border. And they're very worried about that.

We are also focusing on things like female genital mutilation. And in the camp at Kenya we have an education program where we are seeing, I think, concrete results. The program has resulted in hundreds of girls and their families pledging to renounce this practice. And we have a legal aid clinic in another area assisting victims of gender-based violence in Guinea that has seen 95 percent of the cases submitted resolved on behalf of the clients.

In Thailand, we have a program to raise awareness that has helped to remove the stigma that has been attached to victims and has resulted in twice as many women being willing to come forward and report on violence against them.

We had a recent monitoring trip to Liberia and we found that the programs that were supported by PRM in the refugee camps in Guinea and Sierra Leone were continuing and thriving in Liberia. As the people were returning home, the counselors who were trained in the refugee camps by IRC are now working in health clinics and with communities in their home country on prevention and response to gender-based violence and are mobilizing and sensitizing the communities. As one counselor put it, "Gender-based violence is everybody's problem. It is a community issue, and everyone needs to be involved."

On the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by authorities and humanitarian workers, PRM has been adamant in insisting upon improved protection. Since 2002, we have required all of our overseas partners to adopt a code of conduct that protects refugees from sexual exploitation and abuse. And I was very pleased that I happened to be in Kenya last year at the very time that IRC had led the effort to pull all of the NGOs operating in Kenya together and had gotten them all to sign a protocol, a very clear, inter-agency protocol on the prevention of exploitation and abuse. And all the agencies working with refugees in Kenya are committed to abide by this shared set of very high ethical standards of employee conduct.

We also look at safety issues as we review how a camp is organized, from the location of latrines, the placement of lighting, the accessibility of water. We have sponsored projects. Again, there is one that IRC has worked with us on in Chad to pipe water directly into the camp so that women don't have to go outside of the camp where -- when they go outside of the camp they are in danger of being raped.

Beyond logistics, we also require that women be represented equally in camp leadership and be the recipients in large measure of food distribution. Food can be used as a major weapon of exploitation if women are not those that are receiving the food in the camps.

In Chad, firewood collection is a significant protection issue facing women in the camps. Women have to leave the relative security of the camp and go out in search of wood to cook on. And when they do this, they are put in direct competition with the Chadian population, which also is wanting this wood, and many refugee women have been beaten and raped by local Chadians or bandits in the region. The motivation for collecting firewood is that it's an age old tradition to cook over wood, and the males in the culture believe that the food tastes better. Well, we have been working trying to find other ways to address this. And one of the things that we've been trying to demonstrate are solar cookers. And I saw solar cookers when I was in one of the camps, and I have to tell you, the women weren't particularly enthused about it; it's not their cultural thing. But overtime, the wood is just being stripped and there's no place to get wood, and so we have to find other ways to address this, other alternatives. And I think that you're going to see more focus on things like solar cookers.

I want to mention a program that we fund, it's called Internews. It's a Darfur Refugee Radio program. And the project features a gender-based violence program that is called She Speaks, She Listens. It's a program that's changing the lives of women in the camps, and they discuss issues like forced marriage, which is one that we need to put a lot more focus on, keeping girls in school, firewood collection, domestic abuse, services for women who have been survivors of rape and other kinds of atrocities that were committed during the genocide. They interview on this program. They actually interviewed refugee women and experts about these issues that are critical to women, especially issues of protection. And the hope is that as these issues are discussed that this becomes a first step to making systemic

change in the society over time.

The Darfur Refuge Radio project promotes the importance of girls' education and birth registrations, among other things. And both of these issues are really important in terms of protection. When you can keep a young girl in a classroom for a longer period of time, not only is that a relatively safer environment, but the longer you can keep the girl in school the less likely that she's going to be married off at a very, very young age and be exposed to all of the health and other problems that come with early marriage. Birth registration is equally important. It ensures that when baby girls are sick they get age appropriate medications in the proper dosage, and it helps to address what often becomes a future issue that I know you're very interested in of statelessness. When a girl is registered, it is much easier for her to be registered in school and, as I said, that is a relatively safe environment, and I have to say, for boys as well. Keeping boys in school is one way to prevent them from becoming trapped as child soldiers and girls also being taken off as -- to service the military groups that come through and grab them.

When I was in Kakuma one of the things that really struck me was flags that were flying on the tops of huts. And I asked, "What are these flags?" And I was told, "Well, these are families advertising that they have daughters that are eligible for marriage." And when I asked a little bit more about that, what is marriageable age, I was told that basically, when the girl has had her first period, the family is eager for the dowry -- the bride price that the girl can bring, and many of these girls are married off at tragically young ages and have really little hope of a future.

I mentioned education and livelihood programs in the context of combating gender-based violence, but it's important in a broader context. If women and girls are going to have a future in the country to which we hope they can return, the country of origin when conditions are right to go back, or in the case of women who are going to be resettled, they need to have the skills and the ability to be self-sufficient, and to rebuild the community that they came from or to play a positive role in the host country that is willing to resettle them and allow them to start a new life.

The other thing I have to say about education for young children is, for refugee children, this is almost the only thing that provides them any sense of normalcy. And one of the organizations that we fund is Right to Play. And some of you are probably aware of Right to Play, which is providing just modest equipment for children to be able to have that little element of childhood.

I have to tell you, I was a former high school teacher, and I would have loved to have had children in my classes when I was teaching in Maryland that were as motivated and as excited and as eager to be educated as I saw in every refugee camp that I go to. I've had little girls tugging at my heels and the hem of my skirt as I was leaving, saying, "Oh, please find a way that we can stay in school," because they can only go to school in some countries for the first couple of grades. In other countries it may be a little bit longer. I've had them say, "Can you get us a pencil?" And I mean it just tears at your heartstrings. And at the same time that we try to figure out how we can do more for education, we are combated on the other side with having to figure out how you do this in a way that it doesn't provide that so-called pull factor.

This really was driven home to me again when I was in a camp in Kenya where, supposedly, a large number of refugees were supposed to be returning that year to southern Sudan. And instead of them returning, a large number were still coming from southern Sudan into the refugee camp. And they were young, primarily young men. And when I tried to figure out what's going on here, I was told they're coming because they can get an education here and they don't get an education in southern Sudan. And it really drove home that we need to be doing a better job of coordinating with USAID in doing the development on the other side of the border when we're trying to get people to be repatriated to their

homes.

It's exciting if you go to any camp, and I know many of you have been into refugee camps, but it's exciting to see the kinds of training programs that are available, to see the men in the class with the girls that are learning to sew and to see the girls in the class with the guys that are learning to be auto mechanics and carpenters and bricklayers. You do see a lot of equal opportunity education going on and skills training going on.

We have a project that I think deserves special mention, and it's being carried out by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and with the American Red Cross. The International Rescue Committee PRM provided \$500,000 in 2006 to enable you to undertake this very comprehensive research on refugee and IDP livelihood programs and activities, and we are looking forward very much to your findings, the manual field practices, best use, and the pilot livelihood projects in Thailand, in South Sudan and Uganda to help with the research on this tool.

At the same time, they're testing new strategies to enhance the well being of displaced women and adolescents by promoting sustainable livelihoods that are based on real market needs. And that's pretty important that you educate people for what is available out there, what is needed out there. In some situations we are trying to actually develop databases where we are trying to get people to be able to repatriate. We're trying to develop databases in the camp of skills that are available and making that known to the people in the home country that we're trying to get them to go back to.

Another PRM program in Northern Pakistan has helped many vulnerable families following the earthquake. As you know, the Pakistan earthquake left 75,000 people dead and 3-and-a-half million people homeless. And we have worked through IOM with camp leaders, again, really focusing on how you can help people to become self-sustaining again. So rather than just giving people money, what we've been trying to do is provide them a way that they can become financially independent, and this has included things like providing livestock or a sewing machine, helping people to start a small tailoring business, or set up a stall selling something that is a marketable commodity. One of the displaced women that was just kind of heartwarming, she said, "After losing my husband and my house in the earthquake, I was resigned to my fate, but these four goats," that we provided in our program, "have given me new hope. By selling the milk, I will now be able to earn some money and meet the needs of my three children." And you see, those kinds of situations repeated over and over.

Finally, I want to mention that there's probably no better way to protect refugees than resettlement, even though resettlement is an option that is only open to a small percentage. And I want to brag a little bit because the U.S. is the largest resettlement country in the world. We resettle more than half of the refugees resettled worldwide in any given year. Last year we our numbers were held back by something called material support, which is an issue that some of you may or may not know about that I can get into if you're interested. But we resettled 41,500 last year from 67 different countries.

This year our presidential determination -- the President each year makes a submission to Congress and this year he has asked for, as he did last year, 70,000, and we hope that we will be funded for this 70,000. We are going to need these slots. We have been able to break through the barriers of material support to now be able to be looking at resettling probably as many -- we hope as many as 18,000 to 20,000 out of the camps, the border camps in Thailand, of the Burmese refugees and the Chin refugees in Malaysia, who are among, I think, the most vulnerable because Malaysia does not recognize them, does not protect them in any way as refugees, and they literally are hiding in jungles and trying to find ways to eke out a living. We are also expecting this year to resettle a significant number of Burundians that have been living in camps in Tanzania since a massacre in 1973. This is a long protracted population. And we



have populations from many other parts of the world. We're bringing in a lot of Somalis and Sudanese.

Nepal, for those of you that have really followed this issue, you would know that Nepal and Bhutan have been trying to work out their differences, political differences for many, many years while 107,000 people have been living in camps in Nepal, stuck because two countries, can't come to an agreement about how to settle their problem. This has been my latest crusade, and I've had numerous meetings with the governments both of Nepal and Bhutan and I think we're going to see a breakthrough this year. UNHCR has, for the first time, been allowed to come into the camps in Nepal and do a registration, which is the first step towards resettlement. And if all goes well, I think we are very hopeful this summer that we will sign an agreement with Nepal to begin a resettlement program of this population.

On top of that, we are now looking at having to really consider a significant resettlement program for the million-and-a-half Iraqis who are in Jordan and Syria and the vulnerable in that population.

I'm throwing this out because it shows that we got a lot of people out there that we need to be looking at trying to help. And we will never be able to resettle more than a small percentage of the people that are in need, but the U.S., I think, can be proud of the fact that we are out front and we are the leader in resettlement.

Now let me just tell you a few of the things that I've seen in our resettlement program. The wonderful public-private partnership that exists with the NGOs, some of you know this; for others, let me just tell you very quickly. There are 10 major organizations in the United States that have about 365 affiliates around the country in New York City and small town America that welcome refugees when they arrive. Arrangements have been made in advance as to where the refugee family will go and they are greeted by the volunteers that are involved with the organizations that we work through, IRC being one of the large resettlement organizations. They provide housing. They provide household goods. They help with skills training, with getting the children into school, with connecting them to health care, with really mentoring the new families as they come into the U.S.

One thing that I've become convinced is the major element that makes our program successful, it's the determination and it's part of our memorandum of understanding with the resettlement agencies that people are not coming to the U.S. to be on the dole; they're coming to the U.S. to become self-sufficient. And we actually kind of have a requirement that within 90 days we expect resettlement office to have gotten 80 percent of the people who have come in a job.

When you think about this, this is pretty daunting, because a lot of these refugees don't speak a word of English, and they may never have seen anything resembling a computer, much less a lock on a door or know how to flush a toilet. Imagine coming from a remote village in Africa and having to learn all of the things that our cultural orientation tries to prepare people for.

Let me just tell you a couple of really quick stories, and then I'll wrap up. I had the opportunity to visit—I keep talking about IRC because you all do such a great job—the IRC affiliate in Charlottesville, Virginia. And I didn't recognize Susan Hovanec, but Susan, who works with me, and I thank you for helping to organize this tonight, Susan was with me when we went to Charlottesville. And what we saw there was so moving.

The couple of stories that I'll share with you were visiting with an Afghan woman who had been a refugee in Pakistan. She had literally lived a very hard time in a tent with two disabled children, severely disabled children, and she had arrived at our Charlottesville resettlement location. And they said the

Afghan women were kind of hard to deal with because a lot of them really came thinking that they were going to just be given a future, you know, they were going to be taken care of, and it was a bit of a shock when they found out, “No, you have to go to work.” Well, this woman now is a proud homeowner. She worked with Habitat For Humanity. She gave the 360 hours or whatever it is of sweat equity that is required to get into the program. She has a lovely home. Her two disabled children came home from school while we were there in their wheelchairs. It was just heartwarming to talk to her and to hear her story and her appreciation of the fact that she’s got to work hard but she has a life of dignity. She’s a healthcare worker. Life is not easy, but she has a life of dignity.

We visited a noodle shop in Charlottesville. It was a Bosnian woman married to a Chinese man. They had both come separately as refugees, married in Charlottesville, and they have this wonderful noodle and dumpling shop: entrepreneurial spirit at its best in the United States.

I went to another resettlement office in Providence, Rhode Island and we had our lunch that day in a Cambodian restaurant. A woman who had come -- a victim of the Khymer Rouge, had come to the United States, had been able to start a small business, and now had one of the very successful restaurants in Providence, Rhode Island.

When you see these kinds of stories, you can’t help but be proud of what we do. You can’t help but think, this is America at its very best when you see the ability of people to come with often no education, no understanding of English, and yet, within a few years, they’re contributing to the community.

The mayor of Charlottesville raved about what a contribution the refugees make to the town. The Omni Hotel, which employs something like 70 refugees from a whole bunch of different countries in Charlottesville raves about the work ethic of the refugees. So I think these are some of the most gratifying stories of what many of you in this room are collectively involved in.

Let me just end by thanking those of you that are a part of our humanitarian work. It’s your partnership that makes it work. We provide funding and we try to make sure that needs are being met, but it’s our implementing partners on the ground that are critical to getting the job done. A final note, I want to share with you something new. As I realized that these programs for women and children that we think are so important -- the gender-based violence, the skills training and the education—they’re the last things that get funded because if you have to make decisions you’re going to start with the things that keep people alive, the food and the clean water and the health care. And what’s left over is what ends up going into the programs that I’ve been talking about.

It seemed that there’s a lot of untapped resources out there above and beyond what we are able to get our Congress to fund. So we’ve started an International Humanitarian Gift Fund, and we’re going to be launching it in the month ahead. We hope Secretary Rice -- we will be able to get on her calendar. And we’re going to be looking for corporations, individuals, foundations, kids in school, women’s groups, whatever that might make contributions, that might be big ones or small ones. And we will be focusing the money that we are able to raise specifically on girls’ and women’s education, skills training, and gender-based violence. So this is something that maybe some of you will be able to certainly keep your eyes open for and help us to raise some resources that we can do more than we’re doing today.

So on that note, let me stop. If there’s still time, I’d be happy to answer questions.

**DAWN CALABIA:**

Thank you. That was excellent. The Chair has the prerogative to ask one question.

I was going to ask you a question because you mentioned resources, and that's a very serious issue for your bureau. Resources for the Refugee Bureau are very important because if they don't have them they can't support life sustaining activities around the world. One of the big things is obviously the Iraqi refugee crisis, which has been in the news and the hearing last week. And we were wondering, some of us in the community, if there's a chance that we could get into the supplemental that is going to fund the continuation of the military and diplomatic activities in Iraq and Afghanistan and if we could get some money in that to deal with the issue of resettlement of the refugees who might be to come, but even more importantly, assistance to the people who are on the ground who have nothing.

**MS. SAUERBREY:**

We are very focused on just this. We're operating right now under what is called a continuing resolution with the new Congress, which means we're stuck at a lower level of funding than -- certainly, with the Iraqi issue, than even begins to meet the need. We have been talking to the appropriators.

First of all, OMB has to come in with their budget request. And we have been indicating particularly on the Iraq situation that the needs are greater than what is being -- what was budgeted for because, when you think about the budget cycle, we're looking at 2007 in a budget that was basically put together in 2005. And conditions change very rapidly. And when you're in the position of my bureau, which has to respond to whatever the emergency crisis is around the world, often you're caught without the expected -- the resources that were allocated don't even begin to meet the need.

But you're absolutely right that the biggest need is assistance. We have got to help the people that are on the ground. Many of them came initially with resources. In fact, the first major outflow, as best we've been able to define it, were people who were probably the more wealthy, the better educated. Many of them came into Syria and Jordan and they bought houses, and they drove up the price of real estate, which we heard complaints about from the surrounding countries. But if they haven't been able to work, they're spending down what they came with.

The newer people that are arriving are the people who are coming with less and less resources, and they are extremely vulnerable. Jordan and Syria have been very generous countries. However, neither of them accept their new arrivals as refugees; they accept them as temporary visitors. They have open borders. They do not require visas, and people can come and go. And we know that a lot of the Iraqis are going back and forth, some of them checking their homes, checking their businesses that they left behind.

But the needs are tremendous, and one of the great fears that we have is that if we don't get in there very quickly with these two host countries that they will begin -- the humanitarian space is going to get smaller because they're going to stop allowing people to come across the border. Jordan already does not allow young men between the ages of 18 and 35 because they're military age, so young men cannot currently cross the land border. Syria is starting to make more noises that look like they may start restricting passage.

If we're going to ask these countries to continue to be welcoming, to accept refugees and to sustain them for a period of time, we have got to work through both UNHCR and through NGOs to provide the resources on the ground, particularly for healthcare, for education and for shelter.

**QUESTION:**

Do you have any idea of the magnitude we're talking about? I mean for the resettlement, what would that cost, and then what would the assistance cost?

**MS. SAUERBREY:**

I can only tell you that UNHCR's appeal is \$60 million, and we will certainly be trying to do more than our 25 percent share, but it's going to depend on what Congress is going to allocate to us. In terms of the resettlement side, there have been a lot of articles in the newspaper that have been completely wrong because somehow they looked at our report to Congress that had a number anticipated of 500 coming in this year -- in 2006, and have projected that forward. You've seen articles, if you've been following this, that say the U.S. is only planning on 500. Well, that was not and was never the case.

Our allocation for the region, first of all, we have the 70,000 cap that the President asked for; 5,500 were allocated to the region, no specific number specifically for Iraq; 20,000 unallocated that can be put into Iraq resettlement, which means we could have as many as 25,000 slots available for Iraqis. But we don't have the funding, and the later we go into the year without funding the harder it becomes to meet our target goals because you don't just turn this program around over night. Once we start interviewing -- UNHCR is really ramping up, and we are very happy.

UNHCR has created about 10 categories of vulnerability. They have committed that they're going to be referring somewhere between 14,000 and 20,000 that they are identifying as the most vulnerable, that are in the most need of resettlement because they have the least hope of going home or because it's a single woman trying to raise children or it's an elderly person without care or people with medical needs, Christians who probably will not be able to go back, the Chaldean Christians who are particularly vulnerable, people who have been associated with the American government or with NGOs or contractors who are being targeted. So UNHCR is committed to making referrals of somewhere, as I say, between 14,000 and 20,000.

We are going to be starting immediately getting DHS as the referrals are beginning, getting Department of Homeland Security into Amman and into Syria to begin doing the security checks. And here's where we have a little bit of a nightmare thought, because a lot of the people who are fleeing are fleeing after having provided material support by having paid ransom or some sort of blackmail to get out, and we don't know what that's going to do to our program.

We know that it's going to take as fast as we can move as we start doing the interviews and the health screening. The fastest that we are likely to be able to turn around a person from the time that they're interviewed until the time they're on a plane is usually several months. For a lot of these people who are very vulnerable it goes back to the need for assistance, because how are they going to sustain themselves during the maybe three, four months from the time that we start them in the resettlement chain until they get on the plane?

It is taking much of our time trying to work through these problems. That was a very long answer, but this is a really complicated issue.

**QUESTION:**

Well, my question was about material support and how much of an obstacle it is because of just the very thing you were talking about, security, so not just in terms of Iraqis but in terms of other refugees.

**MS. SAUERBREY:**

Does everyone know what “material support” means? I know that many of you work with this and know exactly what I’m talking about, but material support was something that hit us totally unexpected and almost wrecked the refugee resettlement program where Congress, after 9/11, in the interests of the security of the American people, made some significant changes in our security laws.

Just to kind of quickly try to describe it, there was a new group that was created, that was defined as terrorists based on a very broad definition that more or less said if two or more people are acting together and they have a gun and they’re opposing what was the legitimate government, they are now called a “Tier Three Terrorist Organization.” They don’t have to be defined. That’s what they did, so they fall into this new broad category.

It was never meant to mean that the Karan ethnic group in Burma that was resisting the military Junta that was trying to burn down their village and rape their women was going to be considered a terrorist group. I mean we support the KNU, this Karan organization, resistance organization. And yet, under the definition, they fall under this new definition of terrorism.

Someone who has been a member or a combatant of one of these new terrorist groups is totally barred from admissibility to the United States, and there is no way that we can waive that. Someone who has given material support, meaning maybe they gave a bowl of rice to a military group coming through the village or -- some of the most egregious cases that you may have seen.

I think the one that absolutely has been the nightmare case was the woman in Africa who saw her husband killed in front of her and she herself was raped and was forced to wash the uniform of the marauder that attacked her home. The fact that she was washed the uniform was considered material support and that woman was found ineligible to come into the United States under our refugee program.

The glimmer of good news was that there was a provision in the law that allowed the Secretary of State to declare that even though you have contributed material support to one of these new “Tier Three Terrorist Organizations,” the provision is inapplicable to you. So we call it a waiver out of simplicity. And we have now been able -- it took a long time to get the first waiver. And this has been the focus of much of my time and energy as long as I’ve been in my position was to get that first waiver. The first waiver was for the Karan in the Tham Hin refugee camp in Thailand. One of the most exciting days of my life was being in Tom Hin camp and getting on the bus with some of the first refugees that were leaving to come to the United States after we had gotten that waiver signed. I mean that was a very emotional experience.

We now have all of the Burmese refugee groups, the various ethnic groups in the camps along the edge of -- in Thailand along the edge of Burma -- we now have waivers so we can resettle all of those, and we are working on a lot of other waivers. And the process for getting waivers has been moving quickly.

But the group I mentioned first, the combatants, the people who tried to protect their village, are not waivable. So we now have the situation where we have split families, where maybe the mother and four or five children have been interviewed; they are eligible for our resettlement program, and the father was a combatant, and he can’t come. And this family now has this horrible choice; do they split, do they leave the father behind?

The administration is now -- has now been able to work. And I think many of the NGOs have been happy with the direction that this is going to get a law passed, which we hope Congress will act on very quickly, this year, this session, that will also allow the Secretary of State to waive the bar against the combatants.

That's a long explanation of what is material support. But where it's going to hit us in Iraq, as I said, are people that fled Iraq after having maybe had to pay some militia that we don't even know who they are, but it's five or six bad guys who made them pay so their house wouldn't be burned down. As soon as they start showing up for interviews, if they make those kinds of claims, it's going to hit us on the material support bar, and we're going to have to be working, trying to work very quickly and flexibly with the Department of Homeland Security to get those groups identified and get waivers. This is going to be a nightmare.

**A PARTICIPANT:**

I was going to say Senator Schumer is active on the judiciary committee. This will have to go through the judiciary committee. I would encourage us. The Chair of the appropriations subcommittee is Nita Lowey from New York, and I think we have to make sure that Nita knows about our concerns about refugees and that this is life saving money and that it has to be at the front of the queue and not at the back of the queue. So that's my editorial comment.

**QUESTION:**

What are the responses to this legislation?

**A PARTICIPANT:**

There's no legislation at the moment. Senator Leahy had an amendment two years ago, and he lost -- he got 17 positive votes -- because the chair of the committee voted against it.

**MS. SAUERBREY:**

Well, in all fairness, there were some other issues that were tied to the Leahy amendment that created problems with the Department of Homeland Security. I can tell you that the current legislation has been the result of almost a year of painstaking negotiations between the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State trying to come up with something that continues the protection that we all expect our government to provide for the American people against terrorism, genuine terrorism, and at the same time not hurting the people who have been the victims themselves. It's been a long and hard struggle and negotiations to get to a point that we now have something that inter-agency everybody has agreed to.

**QUESTION:**

Has that been introduced?

**MS. SAUERBREY:**

It has not been introduced only because there have been some final negotiations or input from NGOs that we're trying to figure; there's still an effort to try to refine a couple of areas.

The other good news is that the duress situation where material support was provided under duress, the Department of Homeland Security has now devised a way to address those. And I think you're going to see within the next month the first 10 or so of the most egregious duress cases coming out.

**QUESTION:**

I am part of the NGO committee at the United Nations on the status of women and the culture, and the subcommittee on older women. You did mention just briefly that there were some programs specifically for older women. Could you elaborate on that a bit? Women and girls often certainly have our sympathy. Older women do not always have the same kind of empathy shown to them and are often left behind.

**MS. SAUERBREY:**

I think where I referenced it was in terms of our resettlement program that one of the categories of vulnerability that UNHCR has identified are elderly people who do not have a family to be helping them. That would be one area. But certainly, our assistance programs, we certainly hope that our partners on the ground are very sensitive to the needs of elderly women who often are in the same situation if they don't have a family to help them.

**QUESTION:**

I have a number of questions, which I will try to put into one. They all concern security. You've been addressing throughout your speech the problem of security in the camps and access to food and water, and so how are the camps guarded?

And then of course, in the camps there is always this problem of the food distribution being owned, especially in areas with ethnic war that's been going on, by the people who have been the initiators of the conflict who also wind up in camps. They get the control of the food supply and then they bar the people who live in the camps from that food supply. How is that problem dealt with? Who is guarding the refugee camp? Are there any programs for women for instance there to accept protection, to keep some protection if they leave?

**MS. SAUERBREY:**

In terms of the guarding of the camps, this is one of the really big issues that we're looking at, particularly in Africa with Chad and Darfur where it's not just the camps. The refugees in the camps are exposed, and there is not adequate security provided to the refugee camps nor is there adequate security provided to the humanitarian workers.

We are seeing an alarming increase in the attacks on humanitarian workers. Initially those attacks were more stealing cars and stealing communications and those kinds of things. More and more, the attacks are being personalized against the people themselves. And a number of humanitarian workers have been killed, and that's horrible when it happens.

As you probably know, we have been trying to get agreement from President Bashir of Sudan to allow a U.N. peacekeeping force into Sudan. And if this is not one of the most frustrating situations. All of us have to just be wondering how on earth is this going to be resolved when the U.N. is impotent, when the country leader says you can't bring forces in, and the country clearly is involved in some of the things that are creating dangers for the refugees and the displaced.

One of the things that the U.S. is promoting right now is bringing a U.N. force into Chad because, more and more, you're seeing the attacks of the militias across the border attacking the refugees coming out of Sudan and attacking the refugee camps in Chad, and a great danger -- that a lot of the humanitarian organizations were going to flee.

We, at one point, were trying to get the French, since this is a Francophone area, were trying to get the French to step up to the plate and do more in terms of providing gendarmes. There are small numbers. We have provided additional resources to UNHCR to get additional gendarmes to protect the camps, but the protection of the camps themselves in the really dangerous areas is not good. In terms of training women within the camps to do their own protection, I don't know that we have any programs to teach. Does IRC have one? Well, then tell us about it.

**A PARTICIPANT:**

I was going to say, over the years UNHCR has funded NGOs and the U.S. government has funded NGOs to do self-help patrolling, neighborhood-block-watch kinds of things. But the problem is that the security is the responsibility of the host government, and the host government often looks at these people and says, they're not ours; they're somebody else's responsibility.

But the attacks, as Madame Secretary said, are very serious. And these efforts that can be done, that's what the community services officers at UNHCR spend a lot of time on, and social service officers. Similarly, they work with the agent in trying to make sure that older people get to the food, that the food -- if somebody can carry it back to their house, that somebody can cook it for them, that they get to doctor, et cetera. And that's the kinds of important social services that very little funding is available for, and I commend you to keep looking at that.

**MS. MACKINSON:**

Secretary Sauerbrey, I really want to thank you for coming all the way from Washington, D.C. It was wonderful to hear how much you like visiting New York because I think the first thing we need to do is ask for a repeat performance.

I must admit I was quite struck listening to you this evening. I think we all want to thank you. I think for refugees and displaced populations, it's clear that they couldn't possibly have a more eloquent advocate. (Applause.)

You're somebody who really clearly empathizes with their situation, and that really came through to me this evening, and I think to everybody who's here. I want to thank you in particular for your priorities, in fact. And I think I can probably safely speak for the IRC as well on this one and for everybody else in the room.

I remember the first time I met you, and you had just taken up your position. And of course, we were thrilled to get a meeting with you, and we thought we were going to tell you what our priorities were, and hoped that we could make them your priorities. And then before we got started, you laid out what yours were, and they were exactly ours.

I think you've been a real champion of providing quality education to refugees and displaced populations for always remembering that we have to look out for girls, otherwise they may not have the same opportunities. I think you've been a champion of preventing violence against women in many ways, and I wanted to do a particular plug. I was so happy to hear you talking about the problem of firewood collection. I'm going to send you a study that -- so you know about it -- that the Women's Commission has done and assure you that we are really working on this. We're moving forward on this project. We're working with a number of U.N. agencies.

I think solar cookers are one possibility, but luckily, for women who don't like solar cookers, I think that there are many things that we can do, including the kinds of protection patrols that we've seen in some places, and I think if we took all the possible interventions that exist and made sure that all the practical ones were implemented in every setting, I think we could do a lot to lessen this problem.

I also want to thank you for your very early support at the Women's Commission's Livelihood Project. It's not just that your bureau supported us; it's that they were really our first major support, and I think that kind of vote of confidence made a huge difference in our being able to go to other major organizations and secure the really large-scale funding that we have for this project now. And you will be proud of us. We won't disappoint you.



I also want to thank you for being a champion on two other issues that have been raised this evening. I think you've been a yeoman, or perhaps I should say a "yeo-woman" on material support in a way that all of us have recognized. I was so glad as well, when Dawn asked you the question about Iraq to know that you were going to be our champion in terms of getting the kind of assistance that we need for Iraqi refugees and displaced populations as well.

I really can't wait for you to come again. We shall all start working on this. I want to repeat Pat's thank-you in the beginning to Orrick for having been hosts and for everything else actually that Orrick does for the Women's Commission, which is a great deal.

I want to thank Pat Ellis of the Women's Foreign Policy Group for having had the brilliant idea of doing this. We were latecomers, and Pat really asked us if we would like to join, and we were thrilled.

I'd like to thank Dawn for her comments, and for all the people who helped put this together, and also for all the audience for having come and been a very enthusiastic audience. Thank you so much.