

Charter

Southern Refugee Legal Advocacy Network (SRLAN)

Vision

In countries around the world, there are increasing numbers of new organizations and programs aimed at providing rights-based advocacy for refugees. Many of these programs focus on legal aid and counseling, while others are concerned with research, monitoring and policy advocacy. All such organizations are bound by a common desire to root refugee assistance in human rights and international law.

These rights-based organizations have often been unique within their own countries, and isolated from each other internationally. Organizations face common challenges, but opportunities to learn from each other's experiences are not fully developed. At a global level, refugee advocacy is dominated by large humanitarian agencies. But slowly and informally, rights-based refugee organizations have been increasing their cooperation, information sharing, and coordinated advocacy.

This charter is initiated in hopes of transforming the disparate refugee rights organizations into a global movement to expand and improve the protection of refugees in parts of the world where focus on refugee rights has been lacking. To implement this vision, this network of organizations will work collaboratively and in concert to strengthen and expand our rights-based refugee advocacy and legal aid both globally and locally.

Network Principles

- 1 We are dedicated to the principle that refugees are first and foremost people with rights.
- 2 We take our inspiration from the great achievements in advancing the legal rights of refugees in many countries. We recognize with regret that global development of rights-based advocacy for refugees has been uneven. In many places, refugees are still treated primarily as passive victims with endless needs, rather than as people with rights.
- 3 We act out of the conviction that desperate needs usually stem from deprivation of human rights, and that refugees have rights everywhere.

Mission

- 4 We address ourselves to any institution, government, inter-government agency, or non-government organization that has the power to affect refugees' enjoyment of their rights.
- 5 We form this network in order to combine our efforts on issues of common concern, and to share as possible our resources. We work internally among ourselves to promote the highest standards of professional skill and ethics in our work.

Methods

- 6 Our work is based at all times on the rights guaranteed to refugees in law, beginning with but not limited to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees.
- 7 Collectively, we work both on individual cases and on public advocacy. We work as needed through information gathering, counseling, education and public information, provision and promotion of legal aid, public communication, and promoting the enactment and ratification of treaties and laws that expand or implement the rights of refugees. Our member organizations commit themselves to assist both the network and fellow members of the network to carry out these responsibilities.
- 8 We also develop codes and guidelines of professional conduct, for example, the Nairobi Code of 2007, in order to maintain the standards of our own work. Our member organizations commit themselves to maintaining professional and ethical standards, and to assisting other members, and the network as a whole, to do so as well.

Activities

- 9 As members of the network, we engage in the following activities in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America:
- 10 Work in concert for the adoption of international treaties that guarantee and expand the rights of refugees.
 - 10.1 Promote the adoption of domestic legislation that takes a rights-based approach to ensuring the safety and well-being of refugees.

- 10.2 Provide education concerning refugee and human rights law to refugees, lawyers, the public and officials, in particular those individuals and institutions having daily contact with refugees.
- 10.3 Document and report on the refugee protection situation in particular countries.
- 10.4 The provision of pro bono legal aid for refugees.
- 10.5 Coordinate and work jointly to promote improved policies and practices respecting refugee rights by the United Nations, governments, and other international and regional actors.
- 10.6 Promote fairness for asylum-seekers in refugee status determination procedures and other asylum-related proceedings, whether conducted by a government or the United Nations.
- 10.7 Uphold best practices in the provision of *pro bono* legal aid and counseling to refugees, and adopt mechanisms by which to ensure refugees receive the highest quality of assistance.
- 10.8 Systematically share expertise and knowledge, including promoting confidential consultations on individual legal aid, networking and skills development.
- 10.9 Maintain transparent and responsible financial systems that meet accepted professional accounting standards.

Membership

- 11 We are a network of organizations dedicated to the principles, mission and methods enumerated in this charter.
- 12 The network will consist of full and associate members. An associate member is an individual or organization admitted as prescribed in paragraph 14 and is non-voting.
- 13 New member organizations may be proposed by one other member organization, and admitted by approval of two-thirds of existing members. Member organizations may be removed from the network by a two-thirds vote of the existing members.
- 14 In order to be eligible to join the network, applicant organizations should demonstrate that their mission and activities are dedicated to expanding refugee rights advocacy or programs. The organization must have been in

existence for at least 12 months. In order to join this network, the governing body of a prospective organization must agree to the terms of this charter as a condition for membership in the network.

- 15 An individual or organization may be admitted as an associate member of the network if the person or organization can make unique contributions to the network's mission, as determined by nomination of a member organization and two-thirds vote of member organizations.

Act of Establishment

- 16 The network will be considered established when it has five member organizations.

Charter Amendments

- 17 Once adopted, this Charter may be amended by two-third vote of member organizations.

*Concluded at Southern Refugee Legal Aid Conference
Nairobi, Kenya
1 February 2007*