





The year 2005, marks AMERA-UK's third year and an increase in its activities. AMERA-UK raised funding for expanding the services of the Refugee Law Project's (RLP) legal aid clinic (LAC). It now has its own vehicle and is able to respond to urgent calls from refugees in rural areas (see www.refugeelawproject.org). There were three visits by board members to Uganda and RLP's Peter Ekayu spent a one-month training visit at AMERA-Egypt. Dr. Sharryn Aiken, an experienced refugee lawyer from Queens University, Canada, carried out an evaluation of the LAC in December. In Egypt, the last two days of 2005 were dominated by the tragic aftermath of the three-month-long protest of Sudanese refugees against the policies of UNHCR. Responding to the needs of the survivors tested the readiness of AMERA-Egypt be prepared for such emergencies.

The AMERA-UK Board wishes to sincerely thank Mark Pallis, now resigned from the board; he was the first lawyer to come to Cairo in 2000 and did all the 'legwork' for establishing AMERA-UK as both a Limited Company and a Charity.

In 2005, AMERA-UK became a member of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and, for the second year, refugee legal aid organisations were represented at the Pre-ExCom and UNHCR meetings. In 2004, refugee legal aid groups were only able to discuss the problems in a 'side room' at the Pre-ExCom meetings; in 2005, there was a plenary devoted to the issues of access to asylum. In September UNHCR, for the first time, released its guidelines on refugee status determination under its mandate and legal aid NGOs are now analyzing this document through an email group that includes UNHCR staff and NGOs located on the website: www.rsdwatch.org. In 2005, the anti-warehousing campaign organized a conference, 'Civil Society Conference on Refugee Warehousing' that was held in advance of the Pre-ExCom meetings in which Barbara Harrell-Bond was a presenter.

In August Claire Darwin, a lawyer and former intern with AMERA-Egypt, carried out research on our behalf on the situation of refugees in Zambia, and the capacity of two NGOs there who are attempting to provide them with legal assistance. Her report raises a number of issues including: the unwillingness of the state to permit lawyers to represent refugees, the discriminatory nature of national legislation against refugees, as well as the need for funding to employ specialist lawyers to address these issues. (See www.amera-uk.org on Reports page.)

2005 saw the birth of Asylum Access, a California Non-profit Public Benefit Corporation, an AMERA-UK partner (see page 2). It was incorporated by Heller Ehrman, LLP, who donated over \$25,000 worth of pro bono legal services. In the Netherlands, progress is being made towards establishing a foundation that will also raise funds for refugee legal aid NGOs in the South. It is to be called the 3R's, Respect for Refugee Rights (see www.stichting3r.nl).

Perveen Ali, who served as a consultant Programmes Director to AMERA-Egypt left in October and the position was handed over to Tarek Badawy. This marks the full transition of the leadership of the organization to Egyptians. AMERA-UK thanks Perveen very much for her hard work over the 18 months she was with us.

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ABOUT

AMERA

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“ Justice will never die and rights will never get lost as long as there are fair people like you... I owe you my life, nothing more to say. ”

- A Sudanese refugee in Cairo

Continued from previous page

AMERA-UK wishes to welcome Stephanie Grant as a new board member. Stephanie Grant is a lawyer specialising in issues relating to human rights, migration, nationality and refugees. She has directed the Research and Right to Development Branch of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, and was Director of Research at Amnesty International's International Secretariat. In addition, she has practised law as a partner with Bindman & Partners in London. None of this work, nor the work of AMERA-Egypt, reported on the following pages, could have been accomplished without the generous support of the Amberstone Trust, Comic Relief, St. Edmunds College, Allen and Overy, Third Millennium Fund, and Barbara Harrell-Bond.

AMERA Mission Statement

The mission of AMERA is to promote the legal protection of asylum-seekers and refugees through increasing access to administrative justice in international and local institutions; providing legal advice on matters relating to asylum determination, re-settlement, family reunification, and other matters relating to the enjoyment of the fundamental rights; and educating members of the legal profession in matters relating to the law affecting refugees in Africa and the Middle East.

Grants to Partners

In 2005, through Comic Relief funding, AMERA-UK was able to provide grants to partner NGOs in Cairo. Musa'deen received funding to purchase a projector and other equipment for its training activities and to transport four children back to their grandmother in Khartoum. The children had been orphaned by the death of their mother in the expulsion of the refugees from the demonstration. Ma'an used its grant to hold another summer school at the American University in Cairo. Ma'an's annual summer schools are aimed at empowering men and women and raising awareness concerning gender issues.

About Asylum Access

Asylum Access protects and promotes the legal rights of refugees and asylum-seekers in the global South. Dedicated to making refugee rights a practical reality throughout the southern hemisphere, Asylum Access empowers refugees to assert their legal rights by providing free, on-the-ground legal counsel and representation in the first countries to which they flee. Asylum Access also advocates for improvements in refugee law and policy at national and international levels. Together, Asylum Access's legal aid and policy advocacy programs give refugees in the global South the tools they need to assert their legal rights and receive the protection to which they are entitled under international law.



Message from AMERA-Egypt Programmes Director: Tarek Badawy

Having worked with AMERA for three years, it pleases me to see the significant positive developments that have taken place in the organization. This could never have occurred without the help of the permanent staff members and volunteers, who came to AMERA in order to help those in need of legal assistance.

As the leading legal aid organization in Egypt, AMERA plays a major role in refugee protection in Egypt. We work closely with NGOs as well as national and international organizations to improve the lives of refugees. Unfortunately, such task is not without barriers, which represent an ongoing challenge to the full integration of refugees in Egypt. Although many of these barriers were overcome throughout the years of AMERA's existence, more needs to be done. I would like to thank all those who work for AMERA; their daily contribution makes an impact on people's lives.

AMERA-Egypt Staff

- Essam Shiha, Executive Director
- Tarek Badawy, Programmes Director (Oct 2005), Senior Legal Officer (Jan-Sep 2005)
- Perveen Ali, Programmes Director (Jan-Sep 2005)
- Haitham Helal, Legal Officer
- Tarek Mahrous, Legal Officer
- Kini Samson, Legal Officer
- Rana Ibrahim, Legal Officer
- Aya El-Hilay, Legal Officer
- George Milad, Trainee
- Mohamed El Messiry, Trainee
- Courtney Mitchell, Acting Psycho-social Director (Oct-Dec 2005)
- Dr. Dina Al Shafie, Psycho-social Director (Jan-Sep 2005)
- Mahmoud Ali, Office Manager
- Michael Habib, Network Administrator
- Abu Assal Assayed, Receptionist (resettled to the USA)
- Mohamed Hassan, Receptionist (resettled to the USA)
- Navine Razik, Receptionist
- Din Mohamed Din, Receptionist
- Wael el Wakel, Financial Manager
- Nissreen Askar, Legal Secretary
- Am Maurice, Cleaner

2005 AMERA Clients

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Number</i>
<i>Algeria</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Burundi</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Cameroon</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Central African Republic</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Chad</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>China</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Congo-Brazzaville</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>DRC</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Djibouti</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Eritrea</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Ethiopia</i>	<i>280</i>
<i>Eritrea/Ethiopia</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Somali/Ethiopian</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Ivory Coast</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Liberia</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Libya</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Mauritania</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Nigeria</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Palestinian</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Rwanda</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Sierra Leon</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Somali</i>	<i>190</i>
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Sudan</i>	<i>339</i>
<i>Tanzanian/Sudanese</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Syria</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Thailand</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Tunisia</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Uganda</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>1001</i>

RSD TEAM

led by
Rana Ibrahim

Somali Mother

Situations involving inter-refugee conflict are seen with some frequency at AMERA-Egypt due to refugees being separated from their traditional systems for managing their own conflicts. In one instance, a young Somali woman came to AMERA-Egypt for protection. She had become separated from her minority clan during her flight and was now being abused by the father of her child as well as by the Somali Cairo community. The young woman's clans were the minority Geledi Clan, Abyan sub clan, and Abrooni sub sub clan which are subsets of the Digil clan. These clans are persecuted inside Somalia and this persecution continues in Cairo.

The father of her child denied the paternity and beat her upon discovery of the pregnancy. He had another wife and children, a fact she had not known. The Somali community stated the young woman had conceived the child out of wedlock and shunned her. Forced into the street and with nowhere to live, the young woman tried to move from house to house in the Somali community but was continually evicted, harassed, insulted, and threatened. The baby was also at risk of violence from her father.

AMERA-Egypt psychosocial workers contacted mosques, churches, and government institutions trying to find shelter. The National Council for Women (NCW) regretfully could not offer space in their shelter because she was not Egyptian. After continual advocacy, the UNHCR moved her and her baby into a small safe apartment and gave her a rent stipend until she was resettled in Holland.

“When the refugees are afraid for their lives and fleeing their countries of origin, I do not believe they sit down and think, ‘What documentation and specific information will I need to prove to the UN that I was persecuted?’ Who does that when there is a real and distinct possibility that you will be murdered tomorrow? Who in Sudan or Ethiopia or Somalia would even know what to prepare for at a UNHCR interview in Cairo?”

- A former AMERA intern

In 2005, the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Team was successful in obtaining positive outcomes for many clients in their applications to the UNHCR for First Instance, Appeal, and Reopening claims (for those rejected on appeal). The success is due to more cooperation between AMERA-Egypt and UNHCR in dealing with RSD, which developed after AMERA-Egypt persisted in calling upon UNHCR to explain rejections. Eventually, the UNHCR began providing detailed reasons for some cases. This development has improved the quality of AMERA-Egypt submissions and increased the rate that clients are recognized by the UNHCR.

The Special Situation of Sudanese Refugees

Because of the current transitional political phase in the Sudan, Refugee Status Determination is complicated for Sudanese. The UNHCR is granting most applicants provisional protection instead of taking them through the RSD process. This will continue until the situation in the South of Sudan and Darfur is, according to UNHCR, stable. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the Sudanese protest, the UNHCR reconfirmed to AMERA-Egypt that all asylum requests which have not been granted provisional protection will be processed. If they conclude that clients are potential refugees, they will grant them provisional protection.

As a result, Sudanese who come to AMERA-Egypt for help with RSD, and who have not received provisional protection, are screened by the head of the RSD team. Options are explained, and if the case is too weak to submit a legal argument for RSD, the client is advised to wait until the situation in Sudan stabilizes or the country of origin information again supports their case for being refugees. Or, they can wait until the UNHCR again begins granting RSD interviews to Sudanese. If the client's case has substantive elements, it is submitted to the UNCHR.

Eritrean Asylum-Seekers in Egypt

Eritreans who seek asylum in Egypt generally have a low rate of recognition. At AMERA-Egypt it is felt that this is due to the fact that country of origin information has not caught up with reality in Eritrea. A further issue is establishing nationality. Many Eritreans are considered citizens of Sudan. Others are de facto stateless because they are mixed Ethiopian and Eritrean. AMERA-Egypt deals with these clients case by case. In 2004, AMERA submitted a group legal argument on behalf of 16 Eritreans who had been denied refugee status. After our arguments, several were given First Instance or Appeal interviews. We await the results of these submissions.

Ethiopian Oromos Applications

A group of 50 Ethiopian Oromos approached AMERA-Egypt after their applications for refugee status was denied by the UNHCR. Their legal briefs are being finalized and will be presented to UNHCR in 2006 following consultations with expert witnesses.

Somali Asylum-Seekers

Relative to other large nationality groups assisted by AMERA-Egypt, Somali applicants have the highest recognition rate by the UNHCR. In 2005, 50 Appeal cases were processed successfully. Although it is difficult to ascertain exact UNHCR acceptance rates for specific nationalities, the only Appeal cases that AMERA receives from Somali are from clients with credibility issues. In late 2004, AMERA-Egypt submitted a group legal argument on behalf of 40 Somali asylum-seekers. In 2005, over 90 percent of these were granted asylum and some were resettled.

From China to Cairo

AMERA-Egypt staff assisted an Uyghor family from the People's Republic of China gain refugee status, possibly the only people from Uyghor seeking asylum in Cairo. The family is a woman and three children from Xinjiang Autonomous Region which is predominantly Muslim. Since the early 1990s the government of China has waged a campaign to repress what it perceives to be a separatist movement there.

The client's husband was an assistant in the Islamic Centre and a man of learning. When some of his students were involved in an uprising he was arrested and imprisoned for two years, accused of inciting his students to espouse separatist ideas. Miraculously, he survived the inhumane conditions and torture, and threatened with repeated arrests and execution, the husband fled China

For 14 years, throughout her husband's detention, and particularly after his emigration, the client was persecuted, including interrogations in the middle of the night about her husband's associates and activities, being forced to attend public meetings where she was paraded as married to a man of evil, compelled to do hard, menial and unpaid labour, and subjected to medical exams to detect pregnancy in an attempt to show that she had been in contact with her husband. When she could not leave her house without obtaining permission, our client and her children fled, avoiding neighbouring countries where asylum-seekers were being returned to China.

Eritrean Mother of Six

Complicated personal histories are common in the work of AMERA-Egypt, particularly histories of marriages between people whose countries are at war with each other. In one case, an illiterate widow with six minor dependents came to AMERA-Egypt for help obtaining a First Instance interview at UNHCR. As a young girl, she had fled Eritrea in 1981 for Khartoum and married an Ethiopian who worked for the Ethiopian Embassy. Because of the conflict between their countries, they were ostracized by their communities, even receiving threats. In 2004, her husband was killed, allegedly by Eritrean security forces in Sudan. A year later, after further threats, our client sold everything, packed up her six children, and came to Cairo. Now, she struggles to feed her children and has been robbed. Legal advisors obtained an interview for her for November, but due to the UNHCR office closure because of the Sudanese demonstration, her appointment was postponed. The legal officer successfully argued that the UNHCR should keep the appointment, but hold it at the AMERA-Egypt offices, stating that the client was particularly vulnerable.



RSD Explained

Refugees are people who are forced to leave their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution. International protection is provided only after they have been recognized by states. In the past, African governments have recognized refugees by nationality on a prima facie basis. Today, however, more refugee status determination is being decided on an individual basis. In Egypt, all refugee claims are individually adjudicated by the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).



Somali Gunshot Victim

A young woman from a minority clan was shot in the face in Somalia, which partly destroyed the lower part of her face. Given limited emergency medical treatment in Somalia, her relations arranged travel to Cairo where the Somali Cairo community contacted our office. She needed help with medical assistance and refugee status. She could neither speak nor eat and relied on an IV drip.

AMERA-Egypt contacted UNHCR to seek urgent processing. Thanks to this, the Registration and RSD interviews were quickly arranged. After two postponements due her deteriorating condition, she was admitted to Ain Shams Hospital in Heliopolis for emergency surgery. Her Registration and RSD interviews were held at her bedside. The UNHCR recognised her as a refugee under the OAU Convention and issued a Blue Card. AMERA-Egypt staff asked Caritas and the UNHCR to send a nutritionist to her home to teach her how to maintain her health on her liquid diet. AMERA-Egypt staff are currently working on getting her recognized under the 1951 Convention and are pushing for her resettlement.

RSD Interviews in 2005

Event	Total
Appeal Interview	259
First Instance Interview	125
Total	384

PROTECTION TEAM

led by
Tarek Mahrous

Sudanese in Detention

Securing the release of detainees can be a long process. However, there are occasions when things go smoothly. In one instance, a Sudanese asylum-seeker with an expired Yellow Card was arrested at the Cairo airport and threatened with deportation. An AMERA-Egypt legal officer visited the asylum-seeker while still at the airport, informed the UNHCR, and talked to the Immigration police and the client was released.

In another case, three Sudanese refugees became involved in an altercation. When some Egyptian police arrived, they arrested the refugees, took them to a police station, and placed them in detention. One refugee was released after three days. He reported the incident to AMERA-Egypt and two legal officers went immediately to the detention location and discovered that one detainee was a minor. The lawyers arranged for food, then met with the head of the UNHCR Protection Unit who interceded on the refugees' behalf. Their release was secured and the UNHCR re-issued their Blue Cards.

A Case of Harassment

A recognized Congolese refugee was detained in the Maadi police station for twenty-six days. After AMERA-Egypt was informed, two legal advisors went to the police station. The legal advisors suspected that their client had not been charged. When the prisoner was finally brought to them, the legal advisors asked him to sign a statement granting them power of attorney and referred his case to the UNHCR. The next day the client was released.

“ I am so lucky to find people like you who offer me so much help. My suffering in my country made me loose trust in all pepole, but you have returned it to me again. Now I believe there are still good pepole in the world. ”

- A Sudanese refugee in Cairo

Registration & Protection Team

Led by AMERA-Egypt's Senior Legal Officer Tarek Mahrous, the Registration and Protection Team assists refugees and asylum-seekers facing registration and security issues in Egypt. Registration before the UNHCR is a step that all refugees and asylum-seekers must take upon arrival in Cairo. After successful registration, asylum-seekers receive a Yellow Card which enables them to obtain a residence permit from Egyptian authorities. Gaining this Egyptian document is a major accomplishment since it offers asylum-seekers and refugees some sense of security and protection against deportation (*refoulement*) in case of arrest. Certain social service providers even condition their assistance on registration with the UNHCR. Registering with the UNHCR is not without its hurdles. Nearly 250 refugees and asylum-seekers came to AMERA-Egypt for help with obtaining residency stamps, securing identity documentation, and other complicated procedures.

Security & Protection

Refugees and asylum-seekers often have reason to fear for their security in Egypt. AMERA-Egypt has expanded its services to provide legal assistance for refugees under threat of various kinds and to serve as their advocate.

Detention

“Fortress Europe” is a term heard more and more as fear and mistrust of immigrants and migrants spreads, fed by terrorism and economic stress in countries previously open to refugees. This is a new challenge for AMERA-Egypt and all officers are being confronted with refugees who report rights violations and threats of detention. Although statistics are not available on the number of refugees held in detention in Egypt, it is common knowledge that many asylum-seekers and refugees are being detained daily simply for lack of proper documents.

The Registration & Protection Team has developed a detention protocol. The team informs the UNHCR immediately when they receive news that an asylum-seeker or refugee is being detained. Then the team's Egyptian lawyers seek access to the detainees to verify their location, conditions of detainment, and to inform them of their rights. The Registration & Protection Team has increased its collaboration with other NGOs engaged in human rights work, and works alongside the Human Rights Association for the Assistance of Prisoners (HRAAP), the Association for Human Rights Legal Aid (AHLA), and the National Counsel for Women (NCW).

Blue Card Retrieved

A Somali woman came to AMERA-Egypt requesting help in regaining her Blue Card. In order to have the card renewed she placed it in the UNHCR box beside the Mustafa Mahmoud Mosque, where refugees gather before being received into the UNHCR offices. After waiting for a long time, she left.

During the Sudanese demonstration against the UNHCR, no refugees were allowed to enter the UNHCR offices, so the woman was unable to recover her Blue Card. For three months she could not obtain her subsistence support from Caritas for herself or her daughter. The woman was born disabled; one leg does not function properly. AMERA-Egypt legal advisors contacted the UNHCR who agreed to interview her in the AMERA-Egypt offices. After two days, a legal advisor was called to UNHCR to pick up the Blue Card.

Marital Abduction and Kidnapping

A Sudanese woman holding a Yellow Card came to AMERA-Egypt for protection from a husband who beat her to the point of hospitalization and forced her into prostitution. After she and her children fled to a relative's home, her husband sent men who abducted her children. Although she was told he was in Sudan, she lived in fear that he would also abduct her. Because her Egyptian residency permit had expired, she could not go to the police if he returned because she feared she would be deported. AMERA-Egypt legal officers requested a Registration interview from UNHCR to separate her file from husband's so she could divorce him, and requested a Protection interview in the hope that the UNHCR would intercede with the Egyptian State Security officials to keep the woman from being forcibly abducted out of Egypt.

A Bad Combination

A Sudanese man took out a loan from El Mobadara, an organisation funded by UNCHR that gives micro loans to refugees. He used the money for his business of selling watches in the market. One day the police stopped him, expropriated the watches, and told him he could no longer sell watches in the market. This left him unable to repay his micro loan. He came to AMERA-Egypt for help to avoid being charged with the delinquency by El Mobadara. The legal advisor contacted the Community Development Unit at UNHCR and explained the situation. The client was scheduled for an appointment with the UNHCR, but on three occasions, the man was denied entry by the security guards. At last, due to AMERA's intervention, a Community Development staff member met the client and gave him money to cover two instalments on the loan. The Sudanese man believes he can find the money to repay the outstanding amount.



Registration After Months of Effort

An Eritrean man came to AMERA-Egypt with out a passport for help in gaining asylum. Over a three-month period, the man had attempted ten times to obtain an interview with the UNHCR. Not only had he been denied an interview, but he had been accused of holding forged Eritrean identification. The legal advisor wrote a legal submission to the UNHCR Registration Unit and held a meeting with the head of the unit and the client was eventually successful in registering.



Mixed Nationality

A girl of mixed heritage came to AMERA-Egypt for protection and registration with UNHCR. Though born in Eritrea, she grew up in Ethiopia and in 1998, her father was deported to Eritrea along with thousands of other Eritreans living in Ethiopia, leaving his wife and children in Ethiopia. In 2003, the girl was arrested and threatened with deportation so her mother paid a broker to acquire a passport and a contract for her to work in Lebanon. While in Lebanon, she was forced to work 20 hours a day and was repeatedly raped. She escaped when her employer came to Egypt on holiday and forgot to lock her in the apartment.

The UNHCR ruled that the girl has no well-founded fear of persecution. Legal advisors are appealing on the grounds that although she travelled on an Ethiopian passport, she will most likely be considered Eritrean. She fears returning to Eritrea where she would be forced to serve in the military. There is evidence that female recruits are exploited for sex by their commanding officers, as well as evidence from sources including the UNHCR of harsh treatment and torture of draft-evaders and returned asylum-seekers.

Clients Assisted in Detention in 2005	
Nationality	Number
Central African Republic	1
Burundia	1
Eritrea	2
Ethiopia	10
Democratic	1
Republic of the Congo	3
Palestine	6
Saudi Arabia	1
Somalia	7
Sudan	37
Russia	1
Uganda	2
Total	71

MINORS TEAM

led by
Aya El-Hilay

Somali Boat Children Now a Family

AMERA-Egypt staff handled the case of Somali children whose mother and oldest sister died on a boat to Italy. The 16-year-old girl now heads the family of three younger brothers. AMERA-Egypt staff successfully obtained recognition for her with the UNHCR, as well as education for the three brothers. We registered her for English and computer classes and obtained an educational grant for her from Catholic Relief Services.

Somali Girl Gets Blue Card, Medical Care, and a Place to Live

Sometimes cases go smoothly, as with the 17-year-old Somali girl who came to AMERA-Egypt for help gaining legal status in Egypt. Thanks to AMERA-Egypt, she was duly registered at the UNHCR, scheduled for an RSD interview a month later, and recognized the following month, receiving a Blue Card. During this period, AMERA-Egypt advisors accompanied her to All Saints and Caritas where she received medical care. The girl had been living with a woman who mistreated her due to clan prejudice so AMERA-Egypt found another caregiver.

Orphan Boys Find Their Uncle

Two Congolese orphans aged six and nine came to AMERA-Egypt for help getting into school and locating their families. Staff was able to find space for them at St. Andrew's school and then worked with the ICRC to locate their uncle who had relocated to Namibia. The UNHCR is trying to obtain their passports from the Congolese Embassy or will obtain travel documents from the ICRC. Reunification is anticipated in the coming months.

“ I know from experience how difficult it is to interview child refugees. The distinction between dream and reality constantly blurs, ... some of these kids lost their parents, others saw their parents being killed. ”

- Immigration Officer in Cairo

Protecting the Rights of Refugee Children

Many refugee children have arrived in Egypt unaccompanied, separated from their families, or orphaned—and their number is increasing. In 2005, most of those who came to AMERA-Egypt for help were from Somalia, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. AMERA-Egypt represented over 60 of these children as well as providing social assistance to other categories of children, such as the Sudanese who are granted ‘provisional protection’ by the UNHCR.

The Minors Team combines legal aid with psychological and social support. In 2005, AMERA-Egypt legal advisors helped children register with UNHCR, relocate their families, apply for Refugee Status Determination (RSD), and appeal refused cases. Psychosocial workers helped children obtain medical care, register at school and find new caregivers. Making home visits is part of the work, as is therapeutic counselling.

In 2005, the UNHCR and AMERA-Egypt worked closely to ensure the welfare of minors. The UNHCR referred minors to AMERA-Egypt for legal representation and other services, and ultimately turned to us for help processing the emergency applications of children during the protest against the UNHCR when the UNHCR offices were closed.

At the onset of this tense period, UNHCR suspended operations and stopped registering newly-arrived minors, hearing RSD cases, and accepting appeals. But, at the urging of AMERA-Egypt in case after case involving minors, the UNHCR RSD Unit began to rethink their policies and they finally agreed to send their interviewers to AMERA-Egypt and conduct the Registration and RSD interviews for unaccompanied minors in our offices. They also provided registration documents through AMERA-Egypt. In addition, legal officers and psychosocial workers developed closer working relations with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) regarding tracing lost families.

As part of AMERA-Egypt’s networking efforts with other NGOs and agencies, legal advisors on the Minors Team sit on the Best Interest of the Child Determination (BID) committee which is comprised of representatives from different units of UNHCR, Caritas, ICRC, and SOS Children’s Village. Our legal advisors have contributed to discussions regarding assigning appropriate caregivers, determining financial assistance, solving medical problems, settling on durable solutions, easing registration difficulties, and reunifying families. On many occasions, our recommendations have been adopted and carried out by UNHCR and other partner organizations.

Part of the work of the Minors Team during 2005 involved locating suitable caregivers for minors during emergencies. In collaboration with the Psychosocial Team, the Minors Team developed a network of local community associations comprising refugee groups in Cairo as well as Egyptian associations who are willing to assign caregivers in emergencies.

Abandoned Ethiopian Girl Starts a New Life

A 15-year-old Ethiopian girl became known to AMERA-Egypt when her mother contacted the office stating she (the mother) had a brain tumour and had only a short time to live. A legal advisor took her testimony at her home, and later accompanied her for a C.A.T. scan, which revealed no tumour. Informed of this, the woman suffered a psychological breakdown. Anti-psychosis medication was obtained, but a week later the daughter phoned AMERA-Egypt, saying that her mother had gone to church the previous day and had not returned. Investigation revealed that she had left for Ethiopia, telling members of her church that she had a brain tumour, possibly still believing it herself, and asking their help to go home to die. AMERA-Egypt Psychosocial Team found a suitable caregiver for her daughter and has registered her in school.

Somali Minor

An unaccompanied 15-year-old Somali from the Ajuran minority clan came to AMERA-Egypt for help registering at the UNHCR. The previous year, she had fled an arranged marriage in Somalia to a man who was over 60-years-old from the Habar Gidir majority clan. Upon being refused, the man attacked her family's house with a gun, killing her brother and injuring her mother. The girl hid at the neighbours' and finally obtained a passport and visa for Egypt. Her mother sold her house to pay for her daughter's flight. AMERA-Egypt legal advisors obtained a Registration interview for the child, and accompanied her there and to the RSD interview.

Dinka Brothers Find a Secure Home

Two Sudanese Dinka brothers, 15 and 12, came to the AMERA-Egypt office having arrived alone from Sudan. As they had been sleeping on the street, AMERA-Egypt contacted Sacred Heart Church and found a temporary place for the older brother. The younger was taken in by a Sudanese family. During this period, the UNHCR stopped processing Sudanese applications, which meant that the brothers were not eligible for financial assistance to which unaccompanied minors are entitled. AMERA-Egypt pleaded on their behalf with UNHCR personnel and, as a result of this case and others like it, the UNHCR reconsidered its position and allowed Sudanese minors holding Yellow Cards to receive financial assistance. An intern with AMERA-Egypt persuaded the SOS Childrens Village to let the brothers live in their young men's shelter. SOS assures AMERA-Egypt that they will see that the boys continue to receive funding and stay in school.



Minors and resettlement

Resettlement is one of the more difficult aspects of the work of AMERA-Egypt. In one case in 2005, an unaccompanied girl from Burundi had developed a strong bond with her caregiver and wished desperately to be resettled with her. All efforts to trace the child's family had failed and the Burundi community in Cairo was too small to provide a home. The situation was emotionally charged since the child knew that she faced being left on her own in Egypt after the caregiver left. Despite the UNHCR's strict requirements about resettling children only with relatives, the Minors' Team proved in their psychological assessment that the relations between the child and caregiver were vital to the child's welfare. After a home visit, the UNHCR resettled them together.

All cases are complicated, but some are more so. The ICRC and the Minors' Team cooperated in placing two orphaned Congolese siblings under the legal custody of a friend of their mother's who was living in Belgium. The extended families of both parents had agreed that it was in the best interest of the orphans to join this woman and a court order was duly obtained from DRC authorities for legal guardianship.



Somali Girl Achieves Recognition

A 17-year-old Somali girl, separated from her parents at age four, arrived in Cairo with a woman she had lived with in Somalia. When her caretaker could no longer accommodate her, she moved into another woman's house who recommended she register with the UNHCR. The girl was refused by the UNHCR for lack of documents. The Somali Embassy in Cairo issued her a passport and she tried again to register with UNHCR. She was refused on the grounds that her passport lacked an entry stamp and she was told to bring a police report stating how she entered Egypt. On her way to the police station she lost her passport so she reported to the police that she came to Egypt as a woman's child and gave them that woman's passport number.

After coming to AMERA-Egypt legal advisors went with her to UNHCR several times, but a Yellow Card was always refused on the grounds that something "needed to be checked." The case was raised by AMERA-Egypt at the BID committee meeting and a week later she was registered at the UNHCR and given a Yellow Card. She later had her RSD interview and was recognized in September.

Nationality Total	Minor Clients in 2005						
	5-9yr		10-14yr		15-19yr		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Burundi	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Eriteria	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Ethiopia	0	0	0	0	2	6	8
Mixed decent Eritrea/Ethiopia	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
DRC	1	1	0	0	4	1	6
Sudan	0	0	0	0	5	1	6
Somali	0	0	0	0	11	29	40
Total	1	1	0	0	25	39	66

PSYCHOSOCIAL TEAM

led by
Dina Al
Shafie

Sudanese Intersex Client

An intersex individual from the Sudan with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, a form of hermaphroditism, came to AMERA-Egypt for resettlement. The client is Christian, from Wau in the south of Sudan. She had been socialized as female and was perceived by the outside community as female. While in the Sudan, she had been active in the Southern Sudanese student union. Because of her activities in the student union as well as her refusal to repeat Islamic incantations during a celebratory event, she came to the attention of Sudanese authorities who arrested her. While in detention, her condition came to the attention of her captors, who sexually assaulted and tormented her.

The client escaped to Egypt, where she continued to face prejudice due to her ambiguous gender appearance. Her roommates in Cairo do not know her condition and she lost a job because her employer admitted that she was uncomfortable not knowing whether the client was man or woman. Her particular vulnerability due to her intersex status in a society where gender norms are strictly observed brought the client to AMERA-Egypt for help getting resettled by the UNHCR to a more accepting society.

After several counselling sessions with AMERA-Egypt psycho-social workers, she accompanied two legal advisors to two RSD interviews at the UNHCR. The legal officers argued that her intersex status was a danger to her in the Sudan and Egypt. Accepting this, the UNHCR recognized her as a refugee and is exploring resettlement; legal advisors were told informally that her chances for resettlement are promising.

“ There was a social worker at AMERA that helped me to remember every hard moment, which I had in detail, in order to write my testimony. If she hadn't encouraged and helped me to talk, I wouldn't have been able to tell my story to anyone. She referred me to a rehabilitation center, where I went for treatment.”

- A Sudanese refugee

Psycho-social Team

By August 2005 the Psycho-social Team was seeing between 60 and 80 clients per month, plus approximately five monthly referrals from the UNHCR for diagnostic psychological assessments. Client services fall into four categories:

Counselling and Diagnostic Psychological Assessments

Most clients who come to AMERA-Egypt for legal assistance have suffered or witnessed traumatic events either in their own country, during flight, or in Cairo. If their testimony or interview reveals such trauma, AMERA-Egypt legal staff follows a set protocol to identify potential 'post-traumatic cluster symptoms.' The goal is to make certain that the client is stable psychologically, even those who appear to have overcome their traumatic experiences. The 'post-traumatic cluster symptom' protocol was developed by the Psycho-social Team following guidelines adapted from Mitchell's (1983) formal Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) model.

Clients who request counselling are referred to a Psycho-social Team member who conducts an assessment to determine whether individual or group counselling would be more beneficial. Individual counselling involves cognitive and other multi-culturally valid models for trauma survivors. Group counselling involves support groups and psycho-educational groups.

Medical Advocacy

Both legal officers and psycho-social workers help refugees receive medical care, sometimes personally accompanying them to hospitals or clinics to make sure that the refugees are not turned away. Sometimes a referral is all that is needed. Often, medical needs are discovered during a careful initial interview with a legal officer. This officer then refers the client for a medical case review by the Psycho-social Team. Any subsequent referrals are followed-up by the case worker. In particular, HIV positive clients have needs that often surpass other refugees. AMERA-Egypt set up protocols regarding how to assist HIV positive clients, especially assessing risk of suicide. UNHCR, through the work of Dr. Ashraf Azim, has helped refer such cases to hospitals. This is an enormous achievement because before HIV/AIDS victims were automatically deported. Education to avoid ostracism of victims is sporadically conducted by community-based refugee groups.

Educational Advocacy

Educational advocacy involves making sure that refugees know what possibilities for education are available in Cairo, and helping them access these schools. In 2005, AMERA-Egypt issued flyers which listed the steps that refugees must follow in order to enrol their children in Egyptian or refugee schools. But enrolling can be difficult. Not only must the legal officer or psycho-social worker determine which of the few alternatives are possible for the refugee and make sure the proper steps are followed, but the officer must follow-up to insure that there is available space. This can mean lobbying the educational directors to stretch their limits—a task which calls for excellent negotiation skills.

Following publication of AMERA-Egypt's 2004 position paper covering the rights of refugee children to education in Egypt, they established contact with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and succeeded in registering and enrolling Somali children in *Al-Azhar*. The goal for 2006 is to continue to explore further options for primary school children.

General Social Service Assistance

AMERA-Egypt is often forced to provide a variety of services because there are no other NGOs to refer to, including suitable housing. Often refugee communities have no resources to help each other. AMERA-Egypt created a housing database to match clients who need housing with suitable flat-mates. This lessens the financial burden for both and is a good interim solution. Also, jobs and generating income are big hurdles. At AMERA-Egypt offices, job sheets are posted in Arabic and Somali describing job openings and income-generating schemes offered by churches and other organizations.

Emergency Rent Money Obtained

A recognized Sudanese refugee with a 14-year-old daughter was accused of obtaining forged money and was detained in Tanta prison, 120 km from Cairo. His wife came to AMERA-Egypt for help, explaining that in order to obtain emergency financial assistance from Caritas to cover her house rent and avoid being evicted, she had to prove to her landlord that her husband was indeed in prison. The legal advisor established that the husband was in Tanta and provided sufficient evidence to Caritas, who issued the funds.

Sudanese Suicide Attempts

A suicidal 28-year-old Sudanese man from Darfur was referred by AMERA to the Psychiatric Facility of Behman Hospital after his first visit to the office due to urgent need. The hospital's psychiatric/medical diagnosis was 'paranoid delusions' rising from generalized fears after a physical assault some weeks earlier. After two weeks of follow-up correspondence with Behman Hospital, AMERA-Egypt was notified that he could be discharged.

AMERA-Egypt staff had discovered, however, that the client lacked family or friends in Cairo. He could not, or was afraid to, provide contact details other than the vague mention of a former apartment to which he refused to return. He stated repeatedly that he was alone. The AMERA-Egypt mental health specialist, expressed concern about his reverting to suicidal behaviour. An additional problem was the 2,000 LE medical bill, which he could not pay.

Two days before the scheduled discharge, the client went on a hunger strike expressing fear of security officers and concern over the side effects of his medication. The mental health specialist told him that AMERA-Egypt was searching for a person for him to live with, and trying to find someone from Darfur. UNHCR and Caritas were asked to cover the medical expenses and coordinate his aftercare treatment. The mental health specialist persuaded UNHCR and Caritas staff to make a joint visit with her to Behman Hospital where they negotiated an extra week for the client at a reduced rate.

After discharge into the care of a trusted person, the client began out-patient care with a local psychiatrist and received monthly financial assistance from Caritas. He remains in touch with his doctors at Behman and checks in with AMERA-Egypt Psycho-social Team regularly. He appears to be doing well.



Mentally Disturbed Client Was Granted a New Yellow Card

A Darfurian with a previous closed file at the UNHCR came to AMERA-Egypt in a state of extreme mental distress and ate his Yellow Card in front of a psycho-social worker. A legal officer managed to persuade the UNHCR to issue another card, then contacted Caritas. The client was referred to the Anglican Hospital for psychiatric care and drug therapy. Concurrently, the legal advisor dealt with his housing problem by introducing him to another client of AMERA-Egypt who would share lodgings.

Interpreters Group

AMERA-Egypt has a wonderful staff of interpreters who have completed their qualifications at the American University in Cairo. The interpreters are essential to every aspect of work at AMERA-Egypt, as their skills and wellbeing impact our clients immensely. Interpreting is a very difficult job, for this reason, the Psycho-social Team holds a weekly support group for the interpreters to encourage them to speak about their experiences and to support one another.



Referral for Victims of Torture

The Nadeem Centre for Victims of Torture referred a 32-year-old Ethiopian Oromo man who had a Yellow Card to AMERA-Egypt for a psycho-social assessment. The man was suffering from sleeplessness, lack of appetite, fatigue, and body pain. Free prescription medicines had been supplied by Nadeem Centre, including pain medicine for his back and anti-depressants and tranquilizers for sleep. Counselling revealed that the client had stopped taking his medicine because of unpleasant side effects and was becoming unable to function from anxiety and depression. The counsellor arranged an appointment at Nadeem Centre and sent an Oromo interpreter with him. During follow-up counselling at AMERA-Egypt, the man reported that the doctor had changed his medication with positive results. He continues to see his counsellor weekly.

Clients Receiving Counseling in 2005

Psychological Assessments: 35

Female SGBV Clients: 85

Male SGBV Clients: 2

Total number of Psycho-social clients: 189

COMMUNITY TEAM

led by
Haitham Helal

“ Every human being has got a right, but what will happen if you don't know your rights? This was the situation for me as a refugee in Cairo. Thankfully, AMERA legal aid helped me to know my rights as a refugee. ”

- A Somali refugee in Cairo

Community Advisory Board

The first Monday of every month, the Community Outreach Team and other AMERA-Egypt staff members meet with community leaders in our office to discuss issues related to the problems that refugees face, answer questions, and update them with any changes in refugees rights, obligations, or policy changes of institutions. This advisory board was originally established to give feedback to AMERA-Egypt on the quality of its services, but community leaders have been overwhelmingly concerned with getting accurate information about UNHCR's changing policies.

Assistance Offered to Refugee Community Associations:

1. Assisting women and minors in taking security measures, filing police reports, referring SGBV cases to the UNHCR and coordinating with other NGOs regarding urgent cases, particularly domestic violence, unaccompanied or separated minors, and sex trafficking. Showing community groups how to identify these types of problems in their communities and ways to solve them themselves.
2. Providing training on refugee law, Egyptian law and other national and international regulations related to refugee matters to the refugee community at large in community outreach clinics and at specific NGO offices as well as disseminating this information via leaflets as a means of raising awareness, increasing self-sufficiency and aiding refugees as they attempt to integrate into Egyptian society.
3. Establishing a network with other NGOs serving refugees in the region including St. Andrew's, ARHLA Egypt, EOHR, HRAAP, Ashraf Milad, Sakakini, Mussadeen, All Saints Cathedral, Hisham Mubarak Law Centre, Caritas, Shamuua, St. Bakhita, Ma'an, the Nadeem Centre, FMRS, and SUDIA.

Community Outreach Team

Cairo is one of the largest cities in Africa. It has over 17 million people, and refugees live in some 25 different locations. It is difficult for many refugees to make their way across Cairo to the AMERA-Egypt offices so we have formulated an outreach program where legal officers and psycho-social workers set up clinics in areas where groups of refugees live. These Community Legal Clinics (CLC) are offered on a regular basis to refugees and asylum-seekers residing in areas far from the centre of Cairo, or those who have no access to legal assistance due to costs of transportation, work, childcare, family conflicts, health, language concerns, race issues, or economic status. Legal and psycho-social advice are free, substantive and provided in an environment that is informal, friendly, and accessible to the refugees.

AMERA-Egypt aims to serve over a 1,500 clients each year, in five clinics citywide including Arbaa We Nos (Sudanese Community), Ard El Lewa (Somali Community), El Agouza (Darfuriian Community), El Ma'adi (Eritrean and Ethiopian Community) and Nasr City (Somali and Sudanese Community). Staff for each clinic includes three lawyers, two social workers and an interpreter. The staff brings the required legal forms and informational flyers and brochures that groups might need to be referred further for other services.

The Community Outreach Team has established outreach networks of local associations of the various refugee populations in Egypt. Through this network, AMERA-Egypt keeps informed of the key issues that affect refugees' lives and livelihoods, including special problems of vulnerable groups such as single women or minors. Network associates update AMERA-Egypt on community support systems and contacts. In this way, legal aid officers and psycho-social workers can know who to call when they need help meeting a client's needs.

In 2005 AMERA-Egypt invited specific community leaders to a series of meetings with the aim of developing a strategy for legalizing such community associations in Egypt; approaching the UNHCR with community project proposals and issues, and coordinating communication between these associations and UNHCR. In one instance of this community collaboration, AMERA-Egypt hosted a meeting at UNHCR of 17 community leaders from Darfur, representing 13 tribes. AMERA-Egypt is now assisting them in legalising their community association.

AMERA-Egypt staff regularly attends monthly refugee community leaders' meetings held at All Saints Church or at Musa'deen's new offices in Garden City. The role of AMERA-Egypt is to answer questions about Egyptian law related to refugee issues.



Aftermath of the Sudanese Demonstration against the UNHCR

On 30 December 2005, Egyptian riot police violently broke up a peaceful demonstration by Sudanese refugees that had lasted for three months. Among other things, the demonstration was to protest the refusal of the UNHCR to accept Sudanese applications for RSD. The attack by the Egyptian police resulted in the injury and death of at least 27, mostly women and children. Some members of the police were also injured. AMERA-Egypt requested that an independent investigation into the deaths be conducted. On 8 January, AMERA-Egypt issued the following statement:

AMERA-Egypt Statement

A Tragic Event

The night of 30 December 2005 will be remembered by many. As an organization on the ground with refugees in Cairo, AMERA has seen the direct result of the events of that night on the Sudanese refugee community. It is the responsibility of AMERA and other organizations in Egypt to help the Sudanese refugee community overcome these events and to recover as best as humanly possible.

AMERA can only express its condolence and concern to the families and friends who have lost loved ones. We cannot begin to understand the agony and pain involved accompanying these events, but we hold a deep concern for all involved. AMERA is representing immediate family members of many of those killed and liaising with the UNHCR in order to ensure that their burial wishes are honoured. For most, this means transfer of the bodies of loved ones back to Sudan.—AMERA-Egypt 8 January 2006

Urgent Health Concerns After the Break-up of the Demonstration

Due to the violent nature of the police break-up of the demonstration, many individuals were in dire need of urgent medical care. AMERA-Egypt staff arrived on the scene in their cars and taxis and personally transported injured individuals to hospitals all over Cairo, the city of Sixth October, and Nasr City. Individuals from churches and other NGOs were doing the same. AMERA-Egypt staff wanted to document first-hand the extent of the injuries, for legal reasons. AMERA-Egypt has continued to provide follow-up medical support and advocacy with regard to these protester's other social service needs, including crisis counselling and planned long-term mental health support for family members of those who were killed. Staff from AMERA-Egypt attended several of the funeral services and burials.

AMERA-Egypt has expressed confidence in the independence of the Egyptian judiciary and applaud the Attorney General, Mr Maher Abdel Wahed, for opening an investigation into the matter. We encourage him to make a full and public report on the matter.

Letter from the Executive Director

It gives me the utmost pleasure while writing my word to celebrate the third year of operation for Africa and Middle East Refugee Assistance (AMERA) in Egypt. Since its establishment as a UK charity organization for the legal assistance of refugees, AMERA-Egypt continues to provide legal services to the refugee community of Egypt. Each year carried many challenges for our organization. Our staff has done a wonderful job facing these challenging and enriching AMERA-Egypt. Despite its young age, AMERA-Egypt has been experiencing rapid growth and expansion of its staff and the services extended to the refugee community. This year offers an upgrading of our psychosocial unit to enhance the quality of psychosocial services provided to refugees. Acknowledging the importance of the psychological and mental health of our clients has been a wise step, which, I believe will greatly assist our staff in better, serving refugees.

AMERA-Egypt continues to offer internships to people from all over the world in an attempt to enhance cross-cultural awareness of the refugee cause. I continue to be optimistic that AMERA-Egypt will continue to grow and will continue to serve the refugee cause. For years of success coming, I welcome you to AMERA-Egypt to share with our ambitious team the success of our efforts to ensure the protection of refugees in Egypt

Essam Shiha

Cover photos by:
Stacy Schafer
Mohamed Kheider

Inside photos by:
Stacy Schafer
Mahmoud Ali
Deborah Thackery

AMERA-EGYPT Advisory Committee

Appointed by the AMERA-UK Board, the members of the AMERA-Egypt's Advisory Panel are: Fateh Azzam, Director, Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Programme, American University in Cairo; Yousry Mustafa, Human Rights Consultant, Ford Foundation; Dr. Hania Sholkamy, Assistant Professor, Social Research Centre, American University in Cairo; Professor Enid Hill, Department of Law, American University in Cairo, The Committee is chaired by Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond. Essam Shiha and Tarek Badawy are ex-officio members. The Committee is responsible for overseeing the work of AMERA and for employing and evaluating staff performance.

AMERA-EGYPT Volunteers in 2005

Anna Maria Pollock, Canada
Andree Grenier, Canada
Assad Khalid, Sudan
Bobi Morris, USA
Claire Johnson, USA
Clare McGregor, UK
Clare Walter, UK
Courtney Mitchell, USA
Delphine Mauger, France
Florian Razesberger, Austria
Gianna Quach, USA
Hala Rashed, Canada
Jerome Mayer-Cantu, USA
Khalid Mansour, Egypt
Kristen Hagon, Australia
Lisa Weinberg, USA
Melissa McAdam, Australia
Michael Timmins, New Zeland
Mireile Khoraych, Canada
Mi Zhou, Australia
Monica Mbaru, Kenya
Natalia Al-Bani Asensio, Spain
Naureen Tadros, Egypt
Paola Assanelli, Italy
Parastou Hassouri, USA
Rana Taher, Canada
Rebecca Shaeffer, USA
Sakrad Kelly, USA
Samuel Allen, UK
Samy Palmer-Latif, UK
Sara Emam, Egypt
Sarah Stanton, Canada
Sergio Torres, USA
Shadrack King, USA
Sherrice Perry, USA
Sophie Redmond, Australia
Thomas Isherwood, USA

International Advocacy

In 2005, Tarek Badawy (AMERA-Egypt) and Barbara Harrell-Bond (AMERA-UK) attended the Pre-Exom meetings with the International Voluntary Agency Council (ICVA) and Tarek Badawy was an observer at the UNHCR Executive Committee meeting in September in Geneva. The goal of their participation was to continue working with other refugee legal-aid projects in Africa and the Middle East to raise the issues of refugee access to administrative justice, including RSD procedures, as well as the issue of detention of refugees. The ad-hoc coalition was successful in raising these issues, and their concern about UNHCR's conflicting role in RSD was brought up in the agenda of the Executive Committee. It was also included in the final statement of the pre-EXCOM meeting. At the meetings, AMERA-Egypt staff strengthened ties to the UNHCR Geneva staff by meeting with their RSD Unit and putting together a coalition to improve the quality of legal-aid NGOs. Tarek Badawy and Barbara Harrel-Bond were also invited to attend a meeting on EU funding in Prague.

Mr.Essam Shiha attended the Clinical Legal Education (CLE) course organized by the Open Society Institute justice initiative in Bilgi University in Istanbul. The course dealt with laying the foundations for law students in various areas of legal services to the community outside the law school. The concept of CLE is directly related to refugee lawyers as it focuses on teaching various methods for the delivery of legal services and legal aid tailored to the needs and structure of the communities being served.

Staff Training & Development

AMERA-Egypt accepts up to 10 volunteer legal officers and psycho-social workers three times a year who work alongside permanent staff. Volunteers undergo intensive training in refugee law and psycho-social services. They also attend the mandatory monthly training sessions for all staff on topical subjects.

In another type of education and training, AMERA-Egypt staff participate in the weekly seminars of the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies programme (FMRS) at the American University in Cairo. The FMRS is AMERA's main partner in Cairo. In 2005, two staff members presented lectures on the rights of refugee children to education in Egypt for an FMRS course at the American University in Cairo.

Starting in December 2005, AMERA-Egypt and UNHCR initiated joint staff training sessions to cover subjects relevant to both institutions, and to insure that all their staff are using the same information in their work. The first training session was presented by AMERA-Egypt's mental health specialist, and covered how interviewers can handle trauma during the Refugee Status Determination process.



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