

RESOURCE SHEET 3

Young Human Rights Reporter Shortlisted Articles 2014

UPPER PRIMARY CATEGORY

WHERE DO I BELONG?

It's dark. I'm cold and alone. I fear for my life and what's left of my family. I hide in the maze of tents, hoping that, one day, my father and brother will return. But they won't. They never will. My mother tells me that there's no point in wishing now that they've gone; that there's no hope left where we are, or with whom we are.

At the age of eight, I should still be at home, but I'm not. I'm searching for a way out of this never-ending night terror. I was here three years ago. I still am. At first, I was worried about my family and friends. Soon after, I was panicking about where we would sleep for the night, how we would escape the land of fear. Now, that seems nothing, nothing compared to the longing for food. I'm not sure if the lack of skin on me is down to starvation alone. There's fear too.

I am eight years old, but there is no mercy for me. I have fled from the violence, but I face another danger. I am cold and alone, but no one comforts me. I have no home - no one offers me one. I am a Syrian refugee, a child; I have no home, no mercy, and no comfort. I have nowhere to go. I belong to no country and I am haunted. By fear.

The violence in Syria began in March 2011, and over the period of three years, an estimated 100,000 people have died. Over 2 million people have fled Syria and over half are children. By July 2012, the country was in a state of civil war. Children are living in cramped conditions with no school and nowhere to play.

Statistics show that 6 toilets are shared between 400 adults and children in the refugee camps. Many of the children that have survived the conflict are in refugee camps but are working long hours to earn money on a quest to stay alive. Children as young as four are working on the farms. An estimated 250,000 people in Syria are beyond reach of aid.

Can you imagine a life where you don't belong anywhere? You have no one to turn to; nowhere to go. A life with no hope, no love. I feel that people often take the life they have for granted, that everyone lives like them. But not everyone does. Many people, young and old, don't live like us; they don't have the privileges we do. So many people in Syria have had to flee their home, but they can't go back, they don't have that choice.

But we do.

More than 1,400 Syrian refugees have been held in police cells without trial along Egypt's northern coasts in recent months. They were arrested trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe- including more than 50 children. They were released on the condition that they left Egypt altogether.

This is their reality. Where do they belong?

Ciara Griffin (winner)

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UPPER PRIMARY CATEGORY

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Imagine a wonderful valley with flowers sprinkled over beautiful hills. A lake runs through a clearing with children laughing and smiling whilst playing games.

These children don't have that. They are confronted by war and hardened to become soldiers. A soldier is a fighter, a warrior, a killer. These children are used as suicide bombers or spies even as human shields.

They are like you. Only depressed, hurt and scarred by what they've seen. They are young and should be owed the freedom that they need. Juliet is from Uganda and she is a former soldier. She was kidnapped, beaten and forced to see a death when she was only twelve. She could not resist, so she did not even try. Her and other captives were forced into horrible relationships with people way above their age. Her friend was violently killed during an attack, but she saw many other mournful deaths.

She fought in the harsh conditions of the bush where she was staying for four years until at the age of sixteen she fell pregnant after being forced to marry a rebel commander. This was not allowed – girls were there to be used, not loved. If any affection was shown towards any girls the man would be killed. She was forced to walk miles during labour whilst the other troops fought the Ugandan army. This caused her baby to die before it was even born.

This took her to bad health and the baby had to be removed. There was no one to do the operation, apart from the local doctor in the village where she was staying, and an old razor blade. A woman in the town helped her escape back to her family in Uganda. Juliet didn't just leave her life onwards from then, but she went to London and campaigned so all children could get a primary education by 2015.

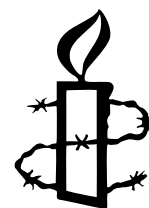
That is two years away and although things have improved there is still a lot you can do. Do you notice that I say 'forced' a few times in that story? That is because that almost sums up child soldiers in one word. Being forced to fight is a violation against their basic and fundamental human rights. There are an estimated three hundred thousand child soldiers around the world. That's three hundred thousand people who could be like the children in the meadow. Most of these children aren't as lucky as Juliet, and those are the children dying every day.

Many countries do this and in most countries it is illegal. Some of these countries are Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Thailand.

Internationally the world is trying hard to put in place agreements to stop this. The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the equality and entitlements of children. It is the first legally binding agreement to combine the full range of rights that a child needs and an adult does not.

Callum Groom (runner up)

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OF INHUMAN BONDAGE – THE ENSLAVED CHILD MAIDS OF INDIA

Of Inhuman Bondage – enslaved child maids of India India is carving for itself a top place with the dubious distinction of employing the largest number of children in the domestic sector. International Labour Organisation estimates there are nearly 12.6 million child workers in India. 20% of these children engage in household chores.

Young girls from poverty stricken families of the poorest states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal are lured to work in cities and earn good money-media is full of such reports. They are sold by traffickers to touts in big cities. 32,000 children were reported missing in India in 2011. Child trafficking increased by 1.1% in 2012. Eventually, many of these children end up as domestic helps in city households wherein they are enslaved by their employers. Some of them are 'bought' by their employers from traffickers and hence not paid any money for their services.

The tasks of the nouveau riche middle class are made easy by poor hands that open doors, fetch groceries from the market, cook, clean, wash and scrub. India's economic boom has given rise to an increasing demand for domestic helps amongst the middle class. Young children are preferred by many families as they are more pliant and do not protest in a big way. We need not look far to find examples of inhuman abuse. Recent reports of the extreme torture meted out to a teenage maid in the house of a top Indian executive are shocking. The girl was scalded by hot pans, beaten and mauled by dogs. She was totally malnourished and overworked.

Likewise, a doctor couple were arrested for torturing and locking up their thirteen year old maid in their apartment for four days without food and water while they were on holiday. An air hostess was held for torturing her 12 year old maid. The master- servant relationship is very prominent. The slave-like lives of these children stare in the face of Human Rights. They are treated as beasts.

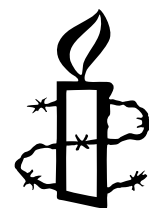
The domestic servants in India is an unorganised sector. Sadly, there is no redressal mechanism. We wonder is this blatant exploitation an expression of the mindset of power in the rising middle class in India which accounts for 30% of the population. Who gives us the right to regard these children as social inferiors? These children are denied the basic needs and education.

We are tempted to call it 'modern feudalism' wherein the helpless are regarded as a different order of the human species. It is an assault to humanity and dignity. In this respect, India reminds us of the Victorian England where poor were expected to serve the rich unconditionally.

Organisations like Shakti Vahini, Action Aid and Save the Children have rescued many such children. Reuters reported that 126,321 trafficked children were rescued from domestic work in 2011/2012. Thousands still suffer in silence. Households should not employ children. Legislations should be implemented which protect these children thoroughly. We could give them a chance to flourish by protecting them under the banner of human rights.

Sharanya Roy (runner up)

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RESOURCE SHEET 3

Young Human Rights Reporter Shortlisted Articles 2014

LOWER SECONDARY CATEGORY

THE BEST DAYS OF YOUR LIFE?

Best Days of Your Life? School? Boring. Learning? Pointless. Algebra, close reading, exams? Yawn. Yes, I'm guilty of it, as I think most kids my age in Britain are: seeing the banal routine of school as nothing more than a barrier from our Xboxes, an unbearable period of time during which we can't check our Facebook profiles.

We take education for granted, sigh over sums, cringe after close readings, frown at French. But not everyone is as lucky as us. Aklima, a 12 year old from Bangladesh, who scavenges at the dangerous local dump instead of attending school. Ishmael, from Sierra Leone, who was recruited into the military at the age of eleven and learnt only how to kill. Alejandra, a thirteen year old who works an exhausting fourteen hour day and has no time for learning.

All over the world, children are prevented from learning, an estimated 70 million of them, according to a report published as part of the 'Back to School' campaign. Only 60% of young people worldwide attend secondary school, and the percentage of secondary students in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia is even more appalling, at 29%! These figures show that although the majority of students worldwide receive education, a very small portion of children in the developing areas of the Southern Hemisphere go to school. Poverty is a major barrier to education. Families cannot afford school fees, and children are instead forced into child labour, or work at home as subsistence farmers.

A shocking one sixth of the world's children are child labourers. Is that the only future they have? Poor teaching standards and lack of resources is another problem, notably in rural Africa. An example is Malawi, where teachers train for only one year and then must teach classes of up to 100 pupils! Girls particularly will not attend school, for the ludicrous misconception in some countries is that girls are not as valuable as boys, and therefore do not require an education. According to the UN Convention on Human Rights, however, every child has the right to education. So why is it so important?

For a start, education is the key to defying poverty and combatting disease, especially in developing countries. Schools offer a safe, secure atmosphere with support, supervision and socialization. Valuable life skills can be taught as well, such as information on HIV/AIDS, malaria, and drugs or alcohol abuse. Also, educated girls are more likely to marry later, have fewer children, and boost the chances of those children's survival and education, gradually climbing the education ladder throughout generations. Schools must receive funding for resources and up to date facilities, and governments around the world must be persuaded that education is the top priority.

We might get homework. We might be subjected to tests. But we have the amazing opportunity to learn. Every child has the rights to personal development. Every child has the right to gain knowledge and experience. EVERY child has the right to education.

Make their futures brighter.

Rosie Young (winner)

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LOWER SECONDARY CATEGORY

CHINA'S DAUGHTERS: A RIGHT TO LIFE

I open my eyes. It's dark. I'm freezing cold and soaking wet. I can hear the rumbling of car engines and the chatter of busy people around me. I don't know where my mother is; nor do I know that I've only just been delivered into this world. I don't know that I haven't been given a name.

I don't know that I have been abandoned and left to die by the roadside. You see I'm a little baby girl... On the bustling streets of China, passers-by occasionally discover the unthinkable - new born baby girls, abandoned like rubbish and left to die.

This appalling crime of killing, or deserting baby girls purely because of their gender, is known as Female Infanticide and Abandonment. It continues to be one of the most severe Human Rights issues facing China today.

Historically, Chinese culture has favoured male children over females because of their greater income potential and ability to preserve the family name. In China, it is illegal for most couples to have more than one child and too often, a girl is a disappointment. Researchers state that millions of female foetuses are aborted, and tens of thousands of baby girls are abandoned, in China annually. Parents, when discovering their child is female, often decide to have an immediate abortion. If mothers decide to continue with the pregnancy, they often have no intention of keeping the child once she is born. Consequently, they destroy one seventh of Chinese girls who are killed by their own parents.

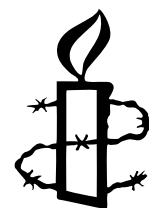
The reality is this- no society will ever survive without women. In 1999, Jonathan Manthorpe reported that, "the imbalance between the sexes is now so distorted that there are 111 million men in China who are unable to find a wife." In recent years, 'bachelor villages' have been appearing in rural areas, inhabited almost exclusively by unemployed and unmarried men. Furthermore, the demand for females in China has encouraged the kidnapping and trafficking of women from other countries, such as Vietnam. Since 1990, 64,000 women have been rescued from forced marriages in China. The slave-trading industry is booming and millions of babies continue to be thrown away every year, all because of China's traditional preference for sons.

So please, if you remember anything from this report, please remember this: Somewhere in the world, at this very moment, a little girl is asking herself, 'Why? Why was I abandoned at birth just for being me?' She'll grow up thinking that she is of little value, aspiring to be something she is not; male. She will convince herself that somewhere out there, her parents are living happily with a little boy and have forgotten that she ever existed, rendering her worthless and surplus to requirement.

How many more girls will lose their lives before somebody puts an end to this despicable crime? Female Infanticide and Abandonment has to stop. We must use education. We must promote human rights. Indeed, we must help those who cannot help themselves.

Christina McCambridge (runner up)

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LOWER SECONDARY CATEGORY

SOWING THE SEEDS OF RUIN

“He was too young,” she weeps. “And so innocent.”

Her gaze is transfixed on the motionless body of her 6-year-old son, lying on the arid soil of their Indian farm. During the night, he had vomited. There’d been excruciating convulsions, and, most painful of all: silence. She turns to her husband for comfort, but he too is in disbelief. “Why?” he sighs. “Why?” For the local medic, there is only one answer. “Pesticide poisoning,” he whispers. “Accidental ingestion.”

This wasn’t an isolated incident; pesticide poisoning is a significant problem all around the Globe. Just six corporations control 75% of the world pesticide market, and they are violating human rights with impunity, causing over 355,000 accidental deaths every year. Workers in agrochemical plants are exposed to malignant substances on a daily basis. This can lead to kidney failure, cancer, and sterility, and breaches the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23: “Everyone has the right to...just and favourable conditions of work.” In the USA, severe birth defects have been caused by pesticides on tomatoes harvested by pregnant women- babies are being confined to a life of horrific physical impairment.

People must be protected from the wrath of these perilous chemicals, and the avaricious companies that produce them. They are aware of the dangers, but, through a toxic concoction of self-deception and greed, let them linger on, leaving a poisonous legacy, visible in the desolation in a mother’s distressed eyes, the anxiety of a labourer diagnosed with cancer, and the incessant anguish of a child with no arms, no legs, and no hope.

But what are the alternatives? Many believe that pesticides are necessary, due to our insatiable demand for food. However, for centuries, people had to cope without toxic assistance, which led to the development of many harmless techniques. Consider a container submerged in the ground; this can both prevent insects from destroying crops, and encourage beneficial creatures to naturally manage pests. One Filipino project reported that farmers who applied much less pesticide than their neighbours achieved more abundant harvests, and saved lots of money. Other strategies include crop rotation, and the Hindu tradition of Panchakavya: an innocuous way of increasing yields.

One alternative, however, isn’t an agricultural saviour: genetic modification (GM). The same companies behind the pesticides have begun to market ‘magic seeds,’ designed to produce insecticide within the plant’s tissues. However, this comes at an exorbitant price. On a remote farm, a subsistence-farmer, and GM customer, gazes across the barren landscape; brown earth as far as his tormented eyes can see. Another failed harvest, and he’ll have to borrow more money to pay his ever-increasing debts. The pain in his heart intensifies: on one hand, a billionaire demanding money. On the other, a starving child, crying for food. It all becomes too much, and, like 1,000 others every month, he reaches for a bottle of insecticide. Designed to kill insects, these chemicals are taking human lives. And sometimes, it’s not accidental.

Aidan Tulloch (runner up)

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RESOURCE SHEET 3

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UPPER SECONDARY CATEGORY

FISHERMEN OR FORCED LABOURERS?

For many, the Thai coastline is an idyllic picture of white sand ornamented with palm trees swaying in the breeze and the turquoise ocean gently lapping against the shore. For others, it's a scene of torture, slavery and inhumane treatment. But the brochures don't tell you that. Beyond the postcard perfect beaches lies a disturbing truth as thousands of young men (mostly from neighbouring Myanmar and Cambodia) are imprisoned on fishing boats, only one in six of which are registered, where they are forced to work in-order to pay back a 'debt' owed to the brokers who ensnared them there in the first place. Due to the suffering economies of Myanmar and Cambodia, thousands come to Thailand in search of a better life for themselves and their destitute families whilst thousands more are smuggled in illegally. The outcome is the same. They are promised a job in a factory or market before ending up miles out to sea, for months even years at a time, on dangerous and unsanitary ships where beatings are regular and payment almost unheard of.

Anyone unable to work or refusing to do so is thrown overboard or shot in what is described as 'casual homicide'. In 2009 a study was undertaken by the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) which discovered that more than half of Cambodian migrants trafficked onto Thai boats had seen their captains killing a colleague.

This is an alarming statistic whose mere existence is disgusting and incomprehensible. One skipper admits that the bullets cost only 25 baht (\$0.83). Surely life is worth more than this?

This issue is shrouded in yet more horror and corruption as one worker claimed to witnessing 'the captain put 15-20 amphetamine tablets into a plastic bag and crush them into a powder and then put that into the drinking water' leading to increased productivity but a throbbing headache. This is nothing short of torture. It is therefore no surprise that many of the labourers choose to face the sharks rather than the shipmasters and dive overboard in pursuit of safety on land despite being malnourished and the risk of never making it to the shore alive.

There are approximately 500,000 slaves throughout Thailand and not just in the fishing industry, which exports worldwide and in 2010 made 7.1 billion dollars: third in the world after China and Norway, so it is a growing yet secretive problem. In Britain, we consume 85,000 tonnes of prawns a year, two-thirds of which come from farms like those in Thailand. So next time you order a seafood platter, remember the tortured and exhausted slaves who caught and processed your lunch.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states: 'the slave trade shall be prohibited in all forms,' so in a decade where leaders like Nelson Mandela can be honoured, dictatorships in the Middle East can be overthrown and women's rights are greatly advancing, why does slavery still exist in such a brutal form?

Alice Reynolds (winner)

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UPPER SECONDARY CATEGORY

KATE EXISTS TO NOBODY BUT HERSELF

Kate exists to nobody but herself. And yet, she is sitting in front of you. When you look at her, you see the same lined palms she does; the same eyes that hunt her down relentlessly in the mirror. The same faint scar across the side of her arm.

The only difference is, you call her John.

Up to 1 in 300 people identify as transgender, but the term is still grossly misunderstood, and this confusion has bred universal prejudice. A recent study found that 41% of American transgendered people have attempted suicide, and the ones that survive the common (and chronically under-reported) physical, sexual and emotional attacks continue to live as punchlines in human form. We laugh over 'men in skirts', deride women with 'killer heels and five o'clock shadow', and call it comedy instead of abuse. Transgenders are defined by everyone's view but their own. Indeed, what is most shocking about transphobia is where it lurks. The DSM-V, the official medical manual for physicians, describes transgender people as being 'affected' with a 'disorder' called gender dysphoria, or a mismatch between our physical sex (genitalia) and the gender we identify with. Because transgenderism is not what we expect, and not how God or genetics are 'supposed' to make us, we have defined it an illness.

This sounds suspiciously how homosexuality was considered a mental illness, forty short years ago.

The fact is, we are experts at equating 'unusual' with 'wrong'. And this is not due to outright malice, but genuine ignorance. The terminology might as well be a foreign language – as I type this on Microsoft Word, every word relating to transgenderism is underscored with an ominous red line. And 'tranny', whilst a deeply corrosive insult to the transgender community, slips unnoticed into conversation in a way the n-word never could.

In India, conditions are even worse. Hijras, or birth-assigned males who adopt a female gender identity (and, in some cases, medically transition to female) experience horrific violence, and often have no choice for survival but to work in the sex industry.

Will 2014 really go down in history as a year where you could be labelled 'circus freak' just for being born with the wrong genitalia? Thankfully, we won't be the ones who have to deal with the answer to that question.

Our children will. Ironically, the gender roles we are so anxious to protect have changed astronomically over the last few centuries. Pink used to be a masculine colour, while blue was considered feminine. High heels were originally worn by men, and were a symbol of virility. Nail polish was not conceptually feminine, but a marker of the higher classes in China. We constantly change how we look, think, speak and love. As Ellen Wittlinger so eloquently puts it, "Why was gender the one sacred thing we weren't supposed to change? Who made that rule?"

But still we cling desperately to our 'normal', deluded into believing that it will remain so.

Daniella Cugini (runner up)

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RESOURCE SHEET 3

Young Human Rights Reporter Shortlisted Articles 2014

UPPER SECONDARY CATEGORY

QATAR 2022: THE UGLY SIDE OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

The Janus-faced nature of rapid progress is painfully obvious when examining the plight of migrant workers in Qatar. This tiny Gulf state, which boasts the largest GDP per capita in the world, has been embroiled in a dispute since being chosen to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Concerns have been raised that the intense summer temperatures will be detrimental to footballers' performances; this, however, is to overlook a far graver issue.

Qatar has the highest ratio of immigrants to domestic citizens in the world, with foreigners comprising over 90% of the workforce. Its voracious appetite for infrastructural growth has been sustained not only by its vast natural gas reserves, but also by this influx of migrant workers, most of whom originate from Southern Asia. Lured by financial incentives and the emirate's prosperity, many go to extreme measures to travel there. They arrive in severe debt after paying exorbitant fees with high interest rates to recruitment 'agents' in exchange for a visa. Instead of being treated with justice and respect, these disillusioned workers face oppression and exploitation tantamount to slavery.

There is compelling evidence to suggest that the World Cup project is dependent on forced labour. Under the kafala system, a policy redolent of medieval feudalism, workers are legally bound to the companies who sponsor their visas. Their passports are routinely confiscated, and they are forbidden to change jobs without the permission of their employer. Exit visas are issued only with the sponsor's consent, leading the Nepalese ambassador to Qatar to condemn the nation as being comparable to an 'open jail.'

A Nepalese worker died almost daily in the summer of 2013. Many were young, fit men who were felled by sudden heart attacks, for they were forced to labour for long hours in extreme heat with no access to free drinking water. The incidence of fatal injuries sustained during construction work is eight times higher than in the UK, and the average worker is paid only \$8 for 15 hours of work. Mired in debt with little opportunity to leave, their predicament is enveloped in a miasma of despair and futility. Many are segregated in remote camps and live in squalid surroundings.

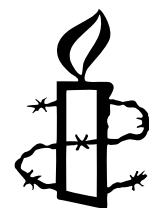
There is no minimum wage in Qatar, and salaries are sometimes withheld completely, whilst independent trade unions are illegal: these conditions provide fecund soil for corruption. It has even been alleged that some employees who protested were threatened with jail.

Woefully little is being done to tackle the crisis. A report by Human Rights Watch stated that 'Workers face obstacles to reporting complaints or seeking redress, and the abuses often go undetected by government authorities.'

This exploitation is an inconvenient truth that many prefer to ignore, for the underbelly of development is not always an attractive sight. The World Cup should be increasing opportunities rather than limiting them, and the global community needs to act before it is too late. Qatar's stadiums must be built with pride, not with blood.

Julia Routledge (runner up)

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RESOURCE SHEET 3

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FURTHER EDUCATION CATEGORY

TORCHING THE TRIBES

“All school uniforms, cooking pans, water containers, cups were burnt. Now the children have to stay home while I find uniform and books. The children are very upset because we have lost everything. The children and elderly people will end up getting pneumonia because we don’t have anything to cover ourselves at night.”-a Sengwer woman, heartbroken, after her home was burnt to the ground.

The Sengwer are an indigenous tribe based in Embobut forest, Kenya- but not, it seems, for much longer. Since 2007, repeated attempts at evicting the tribe have been made, all in the name of conservation. REDD (A UN initiative; Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation), in collaboration with the World Bank and Kenya Forest Service, are behind the torching of over 1000 homes. In 2013 a moratorium on forced evictions was granted in response to complaints of human rights violations. However in January 2014, police accompanied by armed soldiers invaded the villages, chasing out the inhabitants without even allowing them to collect their belongings. Now the whole tribe are sheltering in the forest with their livelihoods gone up in flames, and no authority to turn to.

At an indigenous peoples’ conference in 1999, David Kiptum, a spokesman, explained how their ancestral lands were being taken and the tribe was being forced into a small forest area. In order to preserve the forest’s resources, they had had to make a dramatic lifestyle shift to subsistence agriculture. They were a small but resourceful tribe, experimenting with organic growing and bee keeping, living in thatched mud huts.

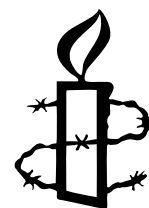
Since they established themselves, many others have seen the wealth of the forests. An influx of settlers has been having a detrimental effect upon the natural resources, polluting and drying up the water sources, scaring away wildlife. Much like people in developed countries, these lifestyles damage the environment much more than the Sengwer. Despite this, these settlers are receiving compensation to leave the forest while the Sengwer’s untitled claims are disregarded.

Globally, deforestation/degradation is the 3rd largest carbon emitter (IPCC 4th Assessment report), meaning that run properly, the initiative would be a significant blow against climate change.. However, REDD has failed to grasp that some inhabitants live in harmony with the forest, benefiting the environment while providing for themselves. Having lived sustainably for thousands of years, the Sengwer are ideal stewards of the forests and could be even more effective than REDD at preserving the forest’s ecological value. The REDD program claims that ‘creating a financial value for the carbon stored in trees’ will help to tackle climate change. But the true value of the forest is multifunctional- its benefits are reflected by how well they are integrated into the full web of life- a web which includes human cultures.

The Sengwer need to be allowed to protect their ancestral forests, and soon, before the only space for this indigenous tribe of Kenya is between the pages of a history book.

Ele Saltmarsh (winner)

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FURTHER EDUCATION CATEGORY

INVISIBLE AND IN NEED

Crushed into a building in the 10th arrondissement of Paris, volunteer doctors bustle about trying to treat as many people as possible. Just like any medical centre around the world, nurses listen intently to stethoscopes, babies whimper as they're given life-saving injections and doctors hand over much-needed prescriptions – but this isn't your average clinic.

As part of an ongoing effort that has been operating in France since 1987, Médecins Sans Frontières is committed to providing direct aid to those who need it most: the vulnerable members of society that have been excluded due to their status as asylum seekers. Treated as sub-human individuals after leaving a life of turmoil behind them, these impoverished people are turned away at the doors of hospitals because they simply can't afford health insurance.

Not only are these forgotten few suffering from various illnesses (such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS), but they are also afflicted with the psychological after-effects of their traumatic experiences. MSF reported that in 2012 alone, their team in Paris undertook 2,100 psychological consultations on top of the usual medical and social assistance they provide.

Unfortunately, healthcare exclusion isn't an isolated issue. All over Europe, asylum seekers are discriminated against in the healthcare system after being subjected to unimaginable horrors. Ongoing political tension in North Africa has led to thousands of families fleeing their homes in the hope of a better future – but they risk their lives in the process. Recent figures show that 43,000 illegal immigrants arrived in Italy in 2013. This sudden flood of migration caused the governor of Sicily to announce a “state of emergency” in October, following the tragic deaths of hundreds of immigrants in Italian waters. If they do survive the perilous journey across the Mediterranean, the migrants often arrive suffering from various conditions they contracted on the horrendous crossing (for example, exhaustion, gastrointestinal problems and frostbite). If these people don't have the correct papers they can be detained in ‘Centres for Identification and Expulsion’ for up to 18 months – these horrific places are both overfilled and poorly managed. As a result, disease is transmitted rapidly and isn't diagnosed.

The same is true right across the continent. You'll find asylum seekers completely disregarded in terms of healthcare in almost every European country you come across. Médecins Sans Frontières reports that “60% of the medical problems faced by migrants detained in Greece are caused by inhumane living and hygiene conditions.” Sadly, this is even a problem in Britain. Doctors of the World had to establish a clinic in London for “vulnerable people excluded from mainstream health services” in 2006.

Amnesty International UK has asked our government to “provide free access to healthcare for all asylum seekers while they're in the UK” because it's become such a problem – all while we continue living our lives of security. The most unfortunate degradation of our humanity as a country is that this is an issue that's happening right here on our doorstep but we just sit back and watch.

Richenda Rae (runner up)

Please note: These are the original articles and have not been edited or checked for accuracy by Amnesty



RESOURCE SHEET 3

Young Human Rights Reporter Shortlisted Articles 2014

FURTHER EDUCATION CATEGORY

COULDN'T CARE LESS: THE UK'S COMPLACENT ATTITUDE TO ELDERLY RIGHTS

One in three elderly care home residents live in fear of neglect and abuse according to a survey carried out by the UK Department of Health in 2013.

Abuse in elderly nursing homes across the UK is becoming an increasingly critical and under-reported issue. With an ageing population and an ever-rising life expectancy, care homes are facing strain from growing patient numbers and responsibilities. Violations of basic human rights in the care of the elderly have been exposed; from the court cases of Hillcroft nursing home employees in late 2013 to Orchid View which closed in 2011 after the deaths of nineteen people were directly connected to negligence and mismanagement.

In the case of Hillcroft nursing home, eight vulnerable elderly dementia patients, unable to defend themselves, were victims of physical and verbal assault. Those responsible for their care were sentenced due to the exposure of this cruelty which included throwing beanbags at patients for 'gratuitous sport' and in one instance, attempting to tip a patient out of his wheelchair.

Although elderly neglect is increasing, little has been done to improve the situation; with under-staffing, spending cuts and one in ten cases of 'daily lifeline visits' by carers lasting under fifteen minutes, according to the United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA). Moreover, care staff has often been discovered to be under-qualified to care for those unable to care for themselves.

This has raised serious concerns regarding the isolation and loneliness of thousands of elderly people, particularly those who live alone. For some elderly care recipients, the carer's visits are the only social interaction they receive in their day-to-day lives. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) established in 2009, has been heavily criticised for failing to prevent violations of human rights and dignity by repeatedly rating care homes 'good' after inspections which are later revealed to be inaccurate. In 2013, the CQC's inspection results at Hillcroft nursing home were 'good' overall in every category, despite its later sentencing for 'weak and inadequate management'. Andrea Sutcliffe the CQC's Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care Services since 2013, set targets to review 25,000 elderly homes by March 2016, and to acquire 600 extra volunteers with backgrounds in social care. Considerations also started on the option of implementing surveillance cameras in care homes to covertly inspect the management and treatment of patients. Additionally, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) are leading inquiries into care for the elderly and are working to secure their rights in law.

But perhaps this will be little comfort to the families and individuals who were and continue to be victims of abuse because of the complacency of organisations including the CQC and the loopholes in legislation regarding elderly human rights. Such loopholes mean that hundreds of thousands of elderly people are not protected by the UK Human Rights Act and the UN. The rights of elderly people continue to be overlooked despite the thousands of cases of discrimination and abuse both inside and outside of care homes that have been publicised.

Rachel Jacobs (runner up)

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