

SEMINAR ON REFUGEE LAW – A BRIEF BACKGROUND

The principles of human dignity, freedom and equality, as enshrined in our Constitution, are rights guaranteed to all people in South Africa, regardless of nationality or citizenship. Since 1994, South Africa has become a party to most major international refugee and human rights conventions. The Refugees Act 130 of 1998 (“the Act”), which came into operation in 2000, was South Africa’s first comprehensive legal framework for refugees and asylum seekers. Together the Act and the Constitution provide protection for the rights of those fleeing persecution, including the rights to fair and efficient status determination procedures, registration and documentation, freedom from arbitrary detention and threat of deportation, and the right of access to services such as health care, shelter and education.

Despite this good formal regime, refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa continue to experience significant difficulty in realising their rights and gaining access to services. The common problems include:

- Unlawful delays in the processing of asylum applications;
- Exploitation in the workplace;
- Unlawful arrest, detention and deportation;
- Unconstitutional treatment of unaccompanied minors;
- Lack of access to information on the system and procedures;
- Destruction of identity documents and property;
- Unconstitutional denials of access to basic services such as health care and education and
- Lack of access to effective administrative remedies, courts and legal assistance.

REFUGEE LAW SEMINAR- PROGRAMME

FRIDAY, 13 APRIL 2012

TIME	SESSION
14.00 – 14.15	Registration
14.15 – 14.30	Introduction ProBono.Org Seminar Objectives and Purpose Odette Geldenhuys Director - ProBono.Org
14.30 – 15.30	Overview of Refugee Law, Practice and Procedures Anthony Sterne ProBono.Org
15.30 – 16.00	A Practitioner's Perspective Olivia Swardling Partner - Hughes-Madondo Inc, Durban
16.00 – 16.30	Questions & Discussion