

CENTER FOR Gender & Refugee STUDIES

Protecting Refugees • Advancing Human Rights

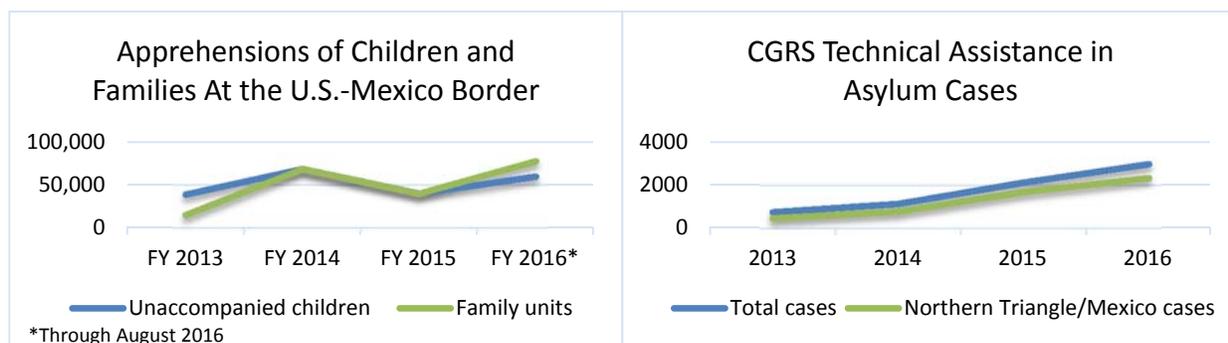
Facing Unprecedented Need, We Expanded Our Reach in 2016

In the past year, women and children from the Northern Triangle countries of Central America – El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras – have arrived at our southern border in the tens of thousands, driven by widespread gender- and gang-based violence to seek a safe haven. **In violation of due process principles, the U.S. government does not guarantee counsel to these women and children who often must go to court alone.** And while compassionate attorneys across the country are volunteering their time to provide representation to this vulnerable population, many lack the resources and expertise necessary to secure protection for their clients.

CGRS provides vital support to attorneys in order to win individual cases and advance the law more broadly by training and providing them with resources. **For Central American women and children, zealous, high-quality representation can literally be life-saving. Our work has never been more critical.**

Training and Mentoring Advocates

- In the past three years, CGRS has experienced an **exponential increase in demand** for our technical assistance and training services. In 2016, **we provided tailored, one-on-one assistance and mentorship to attorneys in nearly 3,000 cases** for asylum and other forms of protection, supporting more cases than we have in any previous year.



- In 2016, **we led 45 trainings, webinars, and presentations, educating over 2,000 advocates** on advanced asylum topics, including how to work with children and survivors of trauma.
- CGRS is a primary trainer and technical assistance provider on children's asylum claims for a national legal services network coordinated by the Vera Institute of Justice. Locally, CGRS is one of two providers of technical assistance and training to the San Francisco Immigrant Legal Defense Collaborative, an innovative model of local, coordinated asylum representation that serves as a blueprint for cities nationwide.
- This year CGRS published a 200-page **comprehensive guide to children's asylum claims**, including an overview of relevant substantive and procedural issues and best practices for working with children and individuals who have suffered trauma (as most asylum seekers have) – a must-read for attorneys new to this area of the law.

Expanding Protections through Strategic Impact Litigation

- Building on the 2014 landmark victory for domestic violence survivors in *Matter of A-R-C-G-*, we strategically intervened in cases around the country with the potential to expand on the *A-R-C-G-* ruling, including *Matter of V-C-*, in which the Board of Immigration Appeals addressed a controversial issue and recognized that **protection should extend to women who have managed to physically leave the homes of**

their abusers in cases where their abusers continue to stalk, threaten, or inflict other forms of abuse or control.

- As amicus curiae, we helped convince the Ninth Circuit to vacate their devastating decision in the LGBT asylum case *Bringas-Rodriguez v. Lynch* and grant a rare rehearing en banc, which we hope will lead to a **more protective ruling for survivors of child abuse** and other vulnerable groups who should not be required to report their abuse to the authorities in cases where such efforts would have been futile.
- At the invitation of the Board of Immigration Appeals, which has national jurisdiction, we submitted amicus briefs in two pivotal asylum cases. The first, *Matter of L-A-*, considers whether individuals persecuted for their family ties can qualify for asylum. The second addresses whether asylum extends to victims of persecution who were forced to harm others under duress—a critical issue left open for the agency by the Supreme Court in *Negusie v. Holder* (2009). In both cases, **CGRS urged the Board to adopt interpretations that preserve asylum eligibility for vulnerable, persecuted individuals who are deserving of protection.**
- CGRS filed two Freedom of Information Act lawsuits **to shed light on draconian, anti-refugee U.S. policies and procedures.** The first, co-counseled with the ACLU, challenged the refusal of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to share information on their unnecessary and inhumane practice of locking up asylum seekers at our borders. The second, co-counseled with the Stanford Immigrants' Rights Clinic and other Bay Area non-profits, sought further information from the Department of Justice on the use of expedited deportation proceedings, or "rocket dockets," for recently-arrived families and children seeking asylum.

Targeting High Denial Immigration Courts

- CGRS partnered with local advocates **to transform the culture of immigration courts** with the highest asylum denial rates in the country. Our strategy: to present well-developed cases under a national media spotlight, and if they are denied, to pursue administrative and federal appeals.

Eloy, Arizona: Judges at the immigration court at the Eloy detention center deny asylum in 94 percent of cases – a clear outlier when one considers that the national average is 50 percent. **We represent an indigenous Guatemalan woman seeking asylum in a paradigmatic case; our client survived extreme domestic violence only to be detained for over a year** by U.S. immigration authorities.

Atlanta, Georgia: **Immigration judges deny a staggering 98 percent of asylum claims in Atlanta.** CGRS is working with the newly formed Center of Excellence, a coalition of local and national advocates, to **close the gap in protection** for refugees. In recent months, we have seen an over fourfold increase in demand for our technical services from Atlanta-based pro bono attorneys.

Policy Advocacy for the Fair, Lawful, and Humane Treatment of Refugees

- CGRS Founder and Director Karen Musalo was appointed to serve on the Department of Homeland Security's advisory committee on family detention, tasked with advising DHS on best practices at family detention centers. Karen joined fellow experts in preparing a comprehensive report, released in October, which **calls on DHS to immediately discontinue the general use of family detention**, finding that detention is never in the best interests of mothers and children.
- CGRS continued to urge policymakers to treat Central American women and children fleeing violence as refugees, rather than criminals. We worked closely with congressional staffers to improve draft language on asylum standards in the newly re-introduced Refugee Protection Act and to garner support for the bill.

Protecting International Human Rights

- We concluded a two-year investigation culminating in a groundbreaking report: ***Breaking Barriers: Challenges to Implementing Laws on Violence Against Women in Afghanistan and Tajikistan with special consideration of displaced women.*** The report provides extensive recommendations for government and civil society actors and serves as an advocacy tool for local partners pushing for reforms.