A lack of access to energy is the norm in humanitarian contexts, creating difficult and dangerous realities for displaced women and girls who are largely responsible for cooking and household energy needs. They often have no choice but to risk being raped, beaten, or killed as they collect firewood up to 20 kilometers away to cook a simple meal, health and light their homes, and/or sell to earn a meager income. While the vast majority of food distributed by humanitarian organizations must be cooked in order to be eaten, cooking fuel is rarely provided.

The Women's Refugee Commission's (WRC) landmark 2006 report Beyond Firewood: Fuel Alternatives and Protection Strategies for Displaced Women and Girls placed this issue on the humanitarian agenda. Through the Inter-agency Standing Committee Task Force on Safe Access to Firewood and alternative Energy (SAFE), WRC spearheaded the first-ever guidance on safe access to cooking fuel in humanitarian settings – a matrix on the roles and responsibilities for each humanitarian response sector involved and decision tree diagrams to assist practitioners as they assess different types of fuel strategies that are appropriate for diverse local contexts. This work has evolved into Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE), a multisectoral program area that ensures safe and sustainable access to cooking fuel and other energy resources for displaced and crisis-affected people worldwide.

It has been nearly a decade since WRC launched its commitment to SAFE and our efforts are ongoing. Starting in 2012, with the support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, WRC embarked on a three-year initiative to reduce the incidence of violence and exploitation experienced by displaced women in the Great Lakes region of Africa. As a result of this program, the international community understands better than ever how to protect women and girls in this complex environment.
WRC co-chairs, along with the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, the Global Interagency SAFE Working Group, which is the leading coordination body for energy access in humanitarian settings. Together with partners such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), WRC continues to champion this issue area to ensure that women and girls are safe and empowered.

Despite some incredible achievements and progress, the daily reality for displaced women and girls continues to be marked by exploitation and sexual violence when they try to access natural resources for their household energy needs. Now is the time for the international community to reflect on the lessons learned from the SAFE initiative since 2006 and revitalize commitments to protect women and girls and enable them to safely access cooking fuel and other energy resources.

The discussion will feature a panel with remarks by:

- Dale Buscher, Senior Director of Programs, Women’s Refugee Commission
- Erika Joergensen, Director, United Nations World Food Programme
- Anne-Christine Eriksson, Deputy Director, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- Corinne Hart, Director of Gender and Humanitarian Programs, the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves

There will be time for questions and discussion at the end of remarks from the panelists.

**Speaker Biographies**

Dale Buscher is the Senior Director for Programs at the Women’s Refugee Commission where he oversees WRC’s programs including protection (livelihoods, disabilities, adolescent and youth, gender, SAFE), reproductive health, and migrants rights and justice. Dale has been working in the refugee assistance field since 1988 in a variety of capacities and in both field and headquarters locations. He worked with Vietnamese boat people in the Philippines and later with Haitian refugees interned at Guantanamo Bay. He has worked with displaced Kurds in Northern Iraq, with Bosnian refugees in Croatia and with Kosovars in Albania and in Kosovo. He went on to work as the Director of Operations for the International Catholic Migration Commission in Geneva where he oversaw the organization’s $25 million international programs – covering 20 countries and 800 staff. He started numerous new programs for the organization, including during extended field postings in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Additionally, Dale has worked as a consultant for UNHCR where he wrote a field handbook entitled Operational Protection in Camps and Settlements.

Erika Joergensen is the Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) New York Office where she oversees WFP’s strategic engagement with key stakeholders including permanent missions, the Secretariat, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the UN funds and programmes based in New York, private sector entities, civil society organizations, media and news outlets, and academia, among others. Prior to serving the World Food Programme in New York, Ms. Jorgensen was the Director and Secretary to the World Food Programme Executive Board, and the Director a.i. of the

Anne Christine Eriksson is presently Deputy Director and Officer-in-Charge at UNHCR’s Liaison Office in New York. She joined UNHCR for the first time in 1987 in India, and has since worked in Ankara, Turkey; Skopje, Macedonia; at the UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland; Zagreb and Split in Croatia; the Regional Office for the Baltic States and Nordic Countries in Stockholm, Sweden; Pristina, Kosovo; as well as right before New York, she was Deputy Regional Representative for Austria, Czech Republic and Germany, based in Berlin, Germany. Anne-Christine has also undertaken emergency missions to Uganda and Tanzania in 1994, Macedonia in 1999 and lately to the Philippines in fall 2009. In between UNHCR assignments Anne-Christine has worked with OSCE in Croatia and been seconded to OCHA, New York. Before joining UNHCR, she worked for the Institute for Human Rights at Abo Akademi University in Finland. She has a Master degree in political science with international law as her main subject.

Corinna Hart is the Director of Gender and Humanitarian Programs at the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves. She designs and manages the Alliance’s strategies and programs on gender, women’s empowerment, and humanitarian response. Ms. Hart manages the Alliance’s gender research grants and develops tools and resources to increase the capacity of cookstove and fuel businesses to include women in the livelihood opportunities created through these value chains. In humanitarian settings, Ms. Hart is leading the Alliance’s work to ensure the available supply of improved cookstoves for immediate deployment in emergency response to reduce vulnerability to gender-based violence and malnutrition that can result from limited access to cooking fuel. She served on the Strategic Advisory Committee for UNHCR’s Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE).