

# WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION APPOINTS DR. XANTHE SCHARFF AS PRESIDENT AND CEO

*Accomplished humanitarian leader, newsroom founder, fundraiser, and women's rights advocate to lead WRC's next chapter*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) today announced the appointment of Dr. Xanthe Scharff as its new President and Chief Executive Officer.

A founder, news leader, fundraiser, and women's rights advocate, Scharff brings over two decades of experience working at the intersection of humanitarian action, gender equity, philanthropy, and storytelling. Throughout her career, she has built organizations, mobilized resources, elevated overlooked voices, and advanced solutions for women and girls affected by conflict, displacement, and inequality.

The appointment comes at a pivotal moment for the humanitarian sector. With global displacement at record levels and humanitarian systems facing unprecedented funding cuts and disruption, WRC is positioning itself to meet emerging challenges while continuing its mission to protect and center the voices of women, children, youth, and other people who are often overlooked, undervalued, and underserved in humanitarian responses.

"Xanthe brings a rare combination of visionary leadership, deep humanitarian expertise, fundraising acumen, and a lifelong commitment to advancing the rights of women and girls," said Alex Arriaga, Co-Chair of the WRC Board of Directors. "She understands both the policy changes needed to improve the lives of displaced people and the power of storytelling to drive those changes. We are thrilled to welcome her."

Most recently, Scharff served as Managing Director for External Affairs and Editor-at-Large at The



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**—DR. XANTHE SCHARFF**  
President and CEO  
Women's Refugee Commission



Freedom Fund, a global collaborative dedicated to ending modern slavery. There, she led development and communications, strengthened fundraising efforts, and helped elevate the voices of hundreds of frontline anti-slavery organizations working across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Prior to The Freedom Fund, Scharff co-founded and led The Fuller Project, an award-winning global newsroom focused on women, where she pioneered reporting partnerships that brought women's perspectives to many of the world's most influential media outlets. Earlier in her career, she served as Associate Director of the Center for Universal Education at The Brookings Institution and founded Advancing Girls' Education in Africa, a US and Malawian nonprofit that now reaches millions of girls through radio programming and education initiatives.

Throughout, Scharff has raised more than \$200 million for social impact organizations and influenced billions of dollars in development and philanthropic capital.

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She continued, "Humanitarian aid is undergoing profound disruption. Yet throughout history, it has been refugee women themselves who have found ways to adapt, innovate, and rebuild amid uncertainty. They have created businesses, educated children, organized communities, and developed solutions long before institutions caught up. As we look ahead, WRC will spotlight their resilience and innovations and welcome new partners into the fold. We will continue advancing policies that protect displaced people while embracing new ideas, partnerships, and technologies that help communities navigate a rapidly changing world."

Since its founding in 1989, WRC has leveraged research, advocacy, and partnerships to improve the lives and protect the rights of displaced women, children, and other vulnerable groups in conflict and humanitarian crises. By centering the voices and championing the leadership of impacted people, WRC has catalyzed transformative change, including advancing the integration of gender equality, disability rights, and sexual and reproductive healthcare into humanitarian policy and practice. WRC has also led national and regional efforts to protect the rights and safety of migrant women and children in the United States; over the past year, WRC launched a first-of-its-kind tool to track the number and treatment of pregnant and nursing women in ICE detention and collected pathbreaking evidence on new forms of family separation, including parents who are deported without being given an opportunity to reunify with their children.

Scharff succeeds [Sarah Costa](#), who drove significant policy improvements for displaced women and vulnerable people during her nearly 16-year tenure from 2010 to 2026.

"Xanthe's career has been defined by a belief that those closest to a challenge are closest to the solution," said Ivonne Dersch, Co-Chair of the WRC Board of Directors. "That principle is deeply

aligned with WRC's approach and our commitment to ensuring displaced women, youth, and communities shape the policies and programs that affect their lives."

As President and CEO, Scharff will lead WRC's global team, strategic planning, advocacy efforts, and partnerships as the organization continues working toward a world where displaced women, children, and youth can live with safety, dignity, and opportunity.

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