



## KINDLING

*22" x 30", Graphite and white charcoal on toned paper with accompanying quotes, figures 1, 3, and 5. 2009-2010*

How different are the concerns of mothers the world over? How different are the needs of families—in cities, villages, refugee camps? Children need care. They must be tended to—fed, clothed, sheltered. These essential truths do not change no matter where you live, or what condition you find yourself in. These are the thoughts which occupied my mind as I took a group of local mothers to collect firewood in the town in which I live, and interviewed them to find out what the essential needs of their families are, and how these needs are met.

Traditionally home is the center of the family, the hearth is the heart of the home, a place where families come together for comfort and warmth. The kindling in these drawings echo this ancient ideal of comfort and security, just as the fragile and unsteady piles of wood echo the vulnerable position of women struggling to sustain their families in the most severe conditions imaginable. These drawings of kindling gathered by individual local mothers, and accompanied by their own quotes obtained in interviews, reveal how universal are the needs of families, just as it made clear how precarious and out of reach these most basic of needs are for hundreds of thousands of mothers, fathers, and their children, world wide.

For Darfuri women, driven from their homes in the Darfur region of Sudan, into refugee camps in eastern Chad, basic needs are as scarce, as they are plentiful for my own children. Since 2003, persecution has driven over two million people, the majority of them women and children, into crowded camps that are scattered in areas with scarce wood for fire. Venturing outside the camps in search of wood to cook their meals often ends in rape and other forms of violence. The search for firewood takes on new meaning, as essential for survival as the quest for fire, food, and shelter from the elements since time immemorial.