

REFUGEE STATEMENT

We are delighted to have the opportunity to join you at the ATRC and thank you for providing a platform for the refugee community to contribute towards the discussions on global resettlement.

Having experienced the process of being resettled ourselves, we are uniquely positioned to provide testimony to the life-changing impact of resettlement, both in terms of the protection it provides and the opportunities it gives us to rebuild our lives and restore our hopes and dreams for the future. We extend our sincere thanks the International Community for your commitment to resettlement programmes and the work of the ATRC over the last 25 years.

We are acutely aware that the vast majority of refugees in need of resettlement do not have the chance to be resettled and cannot stress enough the urgency to ensure more of us are offered opportunities to rebuild our lives in a place of safety through resettlement.

Those of us that are chosen for resettlement often face long delays between being offered a resettlement place, and being resettled. This is distressing for us particularly when resettlement places are then cancelled. We urge you to increase resettlement places and ensure that those of us who are offered resettlement place do not face significant delays.

Our resettlement journey is complex, our expectations are high and we face challenges at every stage of the resettlement journey. Finding work, continuing our education, learning a new language and adjusting to life in an unfamiliar country is difficult for us, and often comes as a huge culture shock. Even stepping out of the door can be a challenge at first, particularly when we are still dealing with our own trauma. We are capable of doing so much but often face significant institutional barriers making it difficult to fulfil our potential. We also have to deal with the impact of stigma and the fact that not everybody will understand who we are.

The challenges we face are not insurmountable and can be overcome. We have our own strength and resilience to build upon. The support we are provided with upon arrival is invaluable to us in terms of helping us navigate new systems, as is the feeling of being welcomed by our new communities. It is often the simple things like a friendly smile, a stranger saying 'hello' in the street or a neighbour introducing themselves that help us feel welcome. We have so much to offer and call for opportunities to build links and connections with our local communities to enable us to make an active contribution.

It is wonderful to be here at the ATRC, but we do not want to be a simply topic of conversation. We want to be recognised as full and equal participants. We are uniquely positioned to contribute to discussions on resettlement. We want to be involved as experts by experience in all stages of the resettlement process and urge each of you to work towards increases and improving refugee participation in your programmes. We must also seek ways to include those refugees who are not able to participate. The voices of those still in camps, and those who have been resettled but are struggling with additional vulnerabilities, should also be given a voice.

Your resettlement programs have given us new life and hope for the future. On behalf of the refugee community we extend our sincere thanks & gratitude for your work and commitment to support refugee resettlement. We very much look forward to working with you to help inform future resettlement programmes and help ensure that those of us resettled tomorrow benefit from the experience and insight of those of us that came before. Thank you.