

## REFUGEE ADVISORY GROUP

# TO THE CONSULTATIONS ON RESETTLEMENT AND COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS

### Member Bios

## Ahmed Bazoon

 Bulgaria

Ahmed is an electrical engineer from Iraq and has lived in Bulgaria since 2015. He has worked in independent journalism for eight years in addition to his work in construction and decoration. While in Bulgaria, he has worked in NGOs for seven years, including in Caritas Sofia as project manager and coordinator of the Career center and mentor programme. He also worked as community manager for the Humans In The Loop Foundation, which provides training and consultations for refugees and immigrants supporting them for finding job. Ahmed is a representative of the Refugee Advisory Board (RAB) Association and a member of the Arab Integration Committee. His journalistic expertise lies in communicating and countering misinformation. He co-designed a website dealing with rumors about refugees in Bulgarian society and among refugees in the country. He is also the owner of a construction company in Bulgaria.

## Ana Maria Diez

 Spain

Ana Maria Diez is co-founder and current President of the Coalition for Venezuela, the largest network of NGOs led by Venezuelan migrants and refugees, spanning +100 NGOs in 23 countries. The Coalition strives to promote and defend human rights, coordinating a comprehensive response to promote social economic integration of migrants, refugees and forcibly displaced people. A lawyer by profession, Ms. Diez holds a Master's degree in Public Management and certificates in Migration and Human Rights, Social inclusion and Social Leadership. Ana Maria has 9 years of experience in the humanitarian field, having worked

with indigenous communities in southern Venezuela. Former Humanitarian Protection Manager for HelpAge International for Latin America and the Caribbean region, she has also led programmes in Haiti, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela. Ana Maria is working on resettlement processes for Venezuelans to Canada, as well in complementary pathways in the Americas and the Caribbean. Ana Maria is a member of the LGBTIQ+ community and an activist for women's leadership.

## Andrea Salablanca

 Spain

A dedicated young advocate for human rights and freedom, Andrea hails from Nicaragua where she has faced unjust accusations of terrorism by the government, and has devoted herself to defending the rights of the Nicaraguan people. Currently based in Spain, she is involved in refugee support through her work with the Asociación Nicaragüense Sevilla-España and the Servicio Jesuita al Refugiado. In collaboration with other NGOs, she operates a shelter for Nicaraguan refugees in Seville, providing a safe haven for student activists fleeing persecution. Her efforts extend beyond mere shelter, as she tirelessly assists refugees in integrating into Spanish society. Andrea's work includes facilitating access to vital information on regularization processes, employment and studies opportunities, and financial literacy through workshops and support programmes. Committed to addressing the immediate needs of refugees, Andrea collaborates with organizations such as Cruz Roja España and Banco de Alimentos to ensure that refugees and migrants receive essential sustenance every Sunday. With a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and currently pursuing a Master's degree in International Migration, Andrea brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her endeavours. As a proud member of the LGBTIQ+ community, she advocates for inclusivity and diversity in all aspects of her work.

## Bahati Mnyaci

 Italy

Born in Kazimiya village, South Kivu province in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bahati is the founder of a refugee-led organization Change Agents Advocacy promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable refugee girls through advocacy campaigns, training, mentorship and socioeconomic empowerment programmes. He has over 19 years of lived experience as a refugee in Zimbabwe where he was propelled to stand up and speak out for the voice of those whose echoes were unheard by the international community. Trained by

UNHCR in leadership, advocacy, and public speaking, Bahati embodies humility and resilience, always fostering a kaizen attitude within him and anyone around him. He is a public speaker advocating for investing in education for the resilience and self-reliance of displaced communities as well as working against early child marriage. He has engaged and intervened in international conferences such as the High Commissioner dialogue on corporation development for displaced communities, and the Global Refugee Forum, and has addressed the European Parliament on the importance of access to quality education for refugees. Bahati also engages in knowledge sharing on climate change mitigation and how best refugee youths can be involved to contribute to the solution. A holder of a Business Management Honors degree, Bahati has accessed an education pathway and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Global Management and Politics at LUISS University in Rome, Italy. Bahati is a student Ambassador and often speaks about education pathways and the need for solutions. He also plays rugby with the LUISS rugby team.

## Barthelemy Mwanza Ngane

### United States of America

Originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Barthelemy was resettled in the USA in 2023 after spending 11 years in Tongogara Refugee Camp, Zimbabwe. There, he began his journey in social practice as a volunteer with UNHCR, and led community initiatives related to gender-based violence, child and youth protection, and climate change in the camp. A refugee leader and activist, he works with the Global Refugee Youth Network to coordinate the capacity building and funding channelling to refugee-led organizations. His achievements include his role as Co-Chair of UNHCR's Global Youth Advisory Council, and launching the Engaging Men in Responsible Practices to Prevent Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls (EMAP) initiative. Barthelemy has also represented his community at several UN conferences in Geneva and New York. Currently residing in the United States of America, his impact as a refugee leader continues to resonate in the global quest for refugee welfare and empowerment.

## Dor Akech Achiek

### Australia

Dor Akech Achiek is a former refugee from South Sudan who was resettled to Australia in 2003. After nine years in a Kenyan refugee camp, he became an active member of his local community in Australia, volunteering with several organizations and initiatives for young

migrants. His roles throughout the years include youth project work with the Auburn Community Development Network (ACDN), Mount Druitt Ethnic Community Agency (MECA) and Community Migrant Resource Centre (CMRC). In 2011, Dor began working with Settlement Services International (SSI) as a Humanitarian Services Case Manager, Senior Team Leader and a Youth Projects Coordinator. Dor is currently the Group Head of Settlement Services at SSI, a community-based, not-for-profit humanitarian organization providing a range of services including humanitarian settlement, housing and asylum seeker assistance. His role provides strategic leadership and operational management of Settlement Services, youth services and social services delivered across SSI Group programmes nationally, and specifically in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. Dor has travelled and presented at a number of international conferences in New York, Geneva, Istanbul, Bangkok, Copenhagen and New Zealand representing refugee communities and advocating for durable solutions to global refugee issues.

## Eyad Jaabary

### Argentina

Born in Syria in 1989, Eyad relocated to Argentina through a community sponsorship programme in 2017. While in Syria, he collaborated with UNHCR translating and adapting orientation and integration material designed for Syrian refugees and hosting communities in Lebanon and Jordan. In Argentina, he participated in various events aimed at improving the refugee experience in the country. In 2018, he became an affiliate translator and interpreter for IOM and, in the same year, he joined Fundación Amal Argentina, an NGO dedicated to community sponsorship in the country. They have worked on many cases of displaced persons from Afghanistan, Syria, and many countries of Central America. As a member of the LGBTIQ+ community, Eyad benefited from his experience to help members of the community in their adaptation and integration in Argentina. In 2023, he was elected a member of the Refugee Advisory Group for UNHCR and participated in the CRCP as a moderator. In December of the same year, he participated in the Global Refugee Forum, and spoke as a panellist in the parallel high-level event on resettlement. He continues to promote the rising role of Latin American communities in hosting refugees and displaced persons.

## Gaida Dirar

### United Kingdom

A public speaker, advocate, and refugee rights activist, Gaida aims to raise refugees' voices

and educate communities on refugee issues. She has studied Media Journalism at Tripoli University in Libya and is now a Politics and international relations student at the University of Hull in the United Kingdom. Gaida has worked as a community development worker and resettlement worker at the British Refugee Council and has volunteered with the UNHCR Medical Team in Egypt. She provides advice to the British Refugee Council, Migration Yorkshire, UK Home office and IOM, and is a member of the Regional Refugee Integration Forum by Migration Yorkshire. In addition to her other roles, Gaida serves as a City of Sanctuary ambassador and is a member of the Sanctuary in Politics group.

## James Maker Atem

### **United States of America**

James Maker Atem was forced to leave Sudan in the early 2000s because of the civil war and became a refugee in Kenya for twenty years. Despite numerous challenges in Kakuma camp, he earned a UNHCR-funded scholarship to a local university, where he completed his BA in Conflict Resolution. After that, James received a scholarship to Columbia University in the United States where he completed a Master's degree in International Affairs. He is currently a Refugee Advisor at the Welcome Corps on Campus and supports the Refugee Advisory Group, NGOs and governments, bringing seven years of expertise in humanitarian efforts, higher education, resettlement and the protection of civilians. His professional journey includes roles such as Tertiary Connected Learning Coordinator with the UNHCR in Kenya, Lecturer at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in Kenya and, most recently, Programme Management Intern at the UN Office of Counter Terrorism. James actively contributes as a guest speaker on the Protection of Civilians for UNMISS within the Department of Peace Operations and has published several articles in peer-reviewed journals, including the Journal of International Affairs at Columbia University. He is skilled in data analysis, communication, editing, research, and critical thinking and is fluent in English, Kiswahili, and Arabic.

## Julia Sheikh

### **New Zealand**

Julia is a fully registered counsellor with expertise in trauma and culturally-informed mental health care. She has extensive knowledge and experience working with refugees and the mental health sector in New Zealand. Julia operates from her counselling private practice working closely with NGOs, government departments, employment sectors, education sector,

ethnic community service providers, youth services, justice system along with various research departments advocating and educating about mental health and refugees settlement needs. She aims to foster the meaningful participation of refugees and refugee-led organizations in the planning and realization of CRCP's objectives. Julia is one of the Co-Chair representatives of the Refugee Advisory Group.

## Madiha Ali Changezi

### New Zealand

Madiha Ali is a former refugee from Pakistan who lived in Indonesia for five years before being resettled to New Zealand in 2018. She graduated from the University of Waikato with her LLB (Hons) majoring in Law and Political Science. Currently, she is working at the Auckland High Court as a Judges' Clerk and is on her way to be admitted as a barrister and solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand. Apart from her interest in law, she is a community advocate and spends most of her time outside work doing community work. She is currently part of the New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel (NZRAP) and the New Zealand National Refugee Youth Council (NZNRYC). She also sits on multiple governance boards and advisory groups such as the Migration Advisory Group at Red Cross and Committee Member at Seed Waikato. Passionate about young people, Madiha advocates for the inclusion of migrant and refugee young people in policies and decision-making. She is currently part of the Ministry of Youth Development Advisory Group. She strongly believes in using her opportunities to bring awareness to the issues her community is facing.

## Matendo Makoti

### Netherlands

Originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Matendo Makoti arrived in the Netherlands in 2011 as a resettled refugee. In the DRC, he was studying law but due to the war he had to flee for his safety. In Kenya, he was raising awareness and advocating for a peaceful cohabitation in different communities. As a counsellor and trainer of trainers, he advocated for mental health, prevention of SGBV, peacebuilding and healthy manhood. One year after completing his integration and citizenship programme in the Netherlands, he joined the Dutch Refugee council as a volunteer, guiding and supporting newcomers towards a successful integration and participation in their new community. He also worked in a project "mentorship", visiting and talking with different municipalities about resettlement, making video materials about life in the Netherlands used in cultural orientation sessions, attending

refugees during cultural orientation and providing a warm welcome at the airport upon arrival. Matendo now works as a case manager with the Ministry of Safety and Justice. He is also a pastor and a member of the RRAG (Resettled refugees advisory group) helping bridge the gap between government, resettled refugees and the host community to promote a peaceful cohabitation and successful integration in the Dutch society.

## Mohammed Naeem

 **United States of America**

Mohammed Naeem is an Afghan former refugee and arrived to the USA as an asylum-seeker in 2001 after having been born in, and grown up in Pakistan. Through family reunification, Mohammed and his family travelled to the USA in the mid-1990s. Mohammed Naeem is a Deputy Director (Strategy and Partnerships) at the American Immigration Council, where he leads programme portfolios in the Center for Inclusion and Belonging (CIB). Previously, he worked at More in Common, a multinational research organization. He holds several advisory and board positions, including for the Ad Council, Urban Institute, Refugee Council USA, UNHCR (Co-Representative of the Refugee Advisory Group), and the United States Refugee Advisory Board (Chair). Mohammed is an alumnus of Stony Brook University and lives in Queens, New York and one of the Co-Chair representatives of the Refugee Advisory Group.

## Mustafa Alio

 **Canada**

Mustafa Alio's journey began as a Syrian student in 2007, but the Syrian uprising in 2011 made returning home unsafe. Instead, he co-founded Jumpstart Refugee Talent, which achieved notable success, including the creation of Canada's Economic Mobility Pathway Program. In 2019, Mustafa made history as the first refugee advisor to a Canadian delegation at the Global Refugee Forum. Currently, as Co-Managing Director of R-SEAT, he champions refugee inclusion in policymaking across 20 countries. Mustafa's advocacy earned him the Meritorious Service Decorations (Civil Division) award in 2021. His influence extends through advisory roles in international refugee networks and collaborations with governments and UN agencies. A dedicated contributor, his articles in publications like the New York Times, Forced migration review, and Stanford Social Innovation Review shed light on refugee issues worldwide.

## Nadine Umutoni Wa Shema

### Australia

Dr Shema is an overseas trained medical doctor, a public health professional and a refugee advocate. She is also the co-founder of the Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development (GLAPD) and serves as the agency's Settlement Operations Manager and Public Relations Officer. Dr Shema holds a double Master's degree in Public Health and Health Management (UNSW). Since her 2011 arrival in Australia, she has devoted herself to the welfare of refugees and migrants from the troubled Great Lakes region of Africa (mainly Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC) as well as the whole Africa by promoting peace, harmony and development, both in Australia and internationally. Dr Shema was one of the advisors at the Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations (AGAAR) in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade between 2017 and 2020. Her success in creating positive intercultural exchanges led to her being acknowledged by Celebration of African Australians Inc. as an influential African Australian and at the 2017 Rotary Inspirational Women's Awards.

## Rabia Mohamad Talal Almbaid

### New Zealand

Rabia Talal Almbaid is a former refugee from Syria who arrived in New Zealand through the New Zealand resettlement program in 2017. He seamlessly blends his rich cultural background with extensive experience in fostering trust and assurance within communities in New Zealand. Rabia is passionate about refugee participation and empowerment, serving as an engagement practitioner and advisor, drawing on experiences and insights from the NGO sector and government. Rabia has been deeply involved in addressing systemic barriers faced by refugees, engaging in grassroots initiatives within local communities with organisations such as the New Zealand Red Cross, local councils, and Health New Zealand. He has also taken on impactful national roles with the Ministry of Social Development, the New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel, and currently serves as the National Senior Partnerships Advisor – Ethnic at New Zealand Police National Headquarters. In his role, he supports and leads national police initiatives aimed at providing better outcomes for Ethnic Communities, including former refugees. He fosters social cohesion and a reassurance of safety for all, supporting refugee service providers, agency partners, and communities across New Zealand. With the New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel, Rabia plays a role in amplifying refugee voices and shaping inclusive policies. Rabia has built a reputation based on a positive outlook, community trust and confidence, and the ability to offer pragmatic solutions. His



journey involves influencing change supported by lived experience and centers around community well-being. In his free time, Rabia enjoys his fitness journey, traveling, and quality time with friends and family.

## Stellah Nikuze

 **Canada**

Stellah Nikuze is a 24-year-old refugee from Uganda. In the mid 90's, Stellah's parents fled Rwanda during the genocide and she was born in the refugee settlement; it was the only home she know. Being born in the refugee camp, she saw first-hand the challenges refugees face including lack of access to education and health, and poverty because of unemployment and restrictions in movement. Stellah is committed to addressing these issues affecting mostly girls and women in my community. She is now a student at Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. In addition, she is the president of World University service of Canada (WUSC) at her University, a student club that advocates for rights, policies, and laws, and for better support for refugees pursuing their studies in Canada. Stellah is also the co-founder of the Hodari Foundation, a refugee-led organization in Uganda based on Kyaka II refugee resettlement. Hodari Foundations supports refugee families with livelihoods, helps provide access to education to refugee children, most of whom are girls and youth, and supports people with disabilities in the refugee settlement and host community.

## Tahira Ali

 **Canada**

Tahira was resettled to Canada in 2017. She is a full-time teacher in an Elementary school in Toronto Ontario. She identified Community Sponsorship Program (G5) as an effective and practical pathway for refugees in Indonesia to start a new life in Canada. Three months after her arrival, she formed a group of five Canadians, raised funds and resettled the first refugee from Indonesia. Apart from teaching, she is also working as Complementary Pathway Manager for Cisarua Learning Ltd (CLL), an Australian charity organization. Since 2017, she has been involved and assisted resettlement process for 73 refugees from Indonesia through the G5 Program. As a community advocate and volunteer, Tahira organizes regular trainings to community members about changes and updates regarding resettlement processes and G5.