

**Implementing Gender Equality: a comparative analysis of women's empowerment in Rwanda and Australia through education, empowerment and mentoring**

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ISBN **978-0-9807965-8-2**

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**Suggested Citation:**

Randell, S & Earnest, J (2015). *Implementing Gender Equality: a comparative analysis of women's empowerment in Rwanda and Australia through education, empowerment and mentoring*. Working Paper 15/1, paper presented at the Commission on the Status of Women 59 (CSW59), at the Churches Centre of the United Nations (CCUN), New York, USA. March 2015. **ISBN 978-0-9807965-8-2**

## **Introduction**

Rwanda is recognised for its strong implementation of the Beijing Plan of Action and Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment. Australia, as an immigrant nation, has a strong multicultural society that has taken in waves of migrants since the Second World War, who have endeavoured to quickly become contributing citizens. This paper presents case studies of seven women foundation students of the Centre for Gender, Culture and Development (CGCD) at the University of **Rwanda** and ten migrant women in **Australia**.

The outstanding contribution these 2011 Master of Gender and Development (MGD) graduates have made to **Rwanda** and abroad in the areas of politics, public service, international and national non-government organisations, private sector and civil society were presented and showcased by two of the graduates, *Donatha Gihana* and *Shamsi Kazimbaya* and the CGCD Founding Director, *Prof Shirley Randell AO*.

Success stories of ten migrant women in **Western Australia** representing government, academia, private sector, community, civil society and not-for-profit sectors who have made a difference to the communities they belong to, their work places and who also then empower other migrant women, were presented by *Associate Professor Jaya Earnest*.

This comparative study highlights? the concepts of empowerment, resilience, peer mentoring, family and how they impact women.

- **Part 1** commences with concise literature on resilience, empowerment, family resilience and mentoring.
- **Part 2** presents the case study methodology used to highlight the life stories of the women from Rwanda and Australia.
- **Part 3** showcases Rwanda and the stories of seven Gender, Culture and Development graduates from the inaugural cohort of the Master in Gender and Development.
- **Part 4** will highlight the narratives of ten migrant women from Australia. The final section will propose some overall findings that focus on women, education and making a difference.

## **Part 1**

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

This presentation is underpinned by the four key concepts of resilience, empowerment, mentoring and family, summarised below

#### **Resilience**

The definition of resilience provided by Atkinson, Martin, and Rankin (2009) is “the ability to return to recover readily from the extremes of trauma, deprivation, threat or stress” (p. 137). Similarly, Rutter (2007, p. 208) states that resilience is the phenomenon observed when individuals have “relatively good outcomes despite exposure to adverse life experiences”. A focus on resilience is consistent with the aim of promoting factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive (Sheldon, Frederickson, Rathunde, Csikszentmihalyi, & Haidt, 2000). According to Walsh (1996, p. 7) “resilience is forged through adversity, not despite it.” Resilience is considered a dynamic process that varies over time (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Mullin & Arce, 2008). What binds these definitions together is that they suggest there is an element of recovery of the individual from difficult events. Bonanno, Galea, Bucciarelli, and Vlahov (2007) widen the debate surrounding resilience to include protective factors that may promote resilience at the individual level such as employment, good social support, family and good health.

#### **Empowerment**

There are different forms of empowerment including psychological, social, political and outcome oriented empowerment. Empowerment is inextricably related to and relevant for particular cultural and social contexts in which people live (Mohajer & Earnest, 2009). Freire (1999) describes the result of empowerment as a cultural synthesis, where all actors involved in the empowerment process undergo change and all knowledge is shared equally. This knowledge has the power to enact social and cultural action and bring about change (Freire, 1999). Internationally, the term ‘empowerment’ is used to describe a range of activities including micro-credit and employment schemes, activities related to reproductive health and self-esteem for female adolescents, women’s empowerment programmes aimed at overcoming gender disparities, and spiritual empowerment activities of faith-based organisations. ‘Empowerment’ has been successfully incorporated into a variety of disciplines (social work, anthropology, development, education and human rights) including participatory or action research. An all-encompassing definition of ‘empowerment’ by UNESCO is: “How individuals/communities engage in learning processes in which they create, share knowledge, tools and techniques in order to change and improve the quality of their own

lives and societies”. Through empowerment, individuals not only manage and adapt to change but also contribute to/generate changes in their lives and environments (UNESCO, n.d.).

### **Family and Resilience**

The family has been known to serve as a protective or risk factor in an individual’s life (Caplan, 1982; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). A separate body of research has since considered resilience as a family-level construct, in which the family is portrayed as an important unit of support (McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, Han, & Allen, 1997; Patterson, 2002; Walsh, 1996). Theoretical constructs that have significantly contributed to the development of family resilience are family stress and family strengths (Olson & Gorall, 2003; Silberberg, 2004). Family resilience has been described as how families use their strengths in times of stress (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996). Culture is also a vital aspect of family resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005). We know from the literature, that strong connectedness and being able to seek reassurance and safety are all factors that can help increase family resilience. These strong connections, and the need for social and cultural cohesiveness are all factors observed within the family (Brookes, 2010).

### **Mentoring**

Mentoring is mentioned as a vital contribution to a successful career, particularly for women. Mentoring has traditionally been defined as a one-to-one relationship in which an experienced older career person guides and supports the career development of a new or early-career member. Some members of migrant communities organise in their own time peer mentoring of new migrants. This enables newly arrived migrants the opportunity to create a social network, learn about their new home, and meet the community (Earnest, 2009). More recently, Sorcenelli & Yun (2007) have proposed a model that encourages a broader, more flexible network of support, in which no single person is expected to possess the expertise required to help someone navigate a career. In this model, robust networks are established by engaging multiple ‘mentoring partners’ in non-hierarchical, collaborative, cross-cultural partnerships to address specific areas of mentoring, such as research, teaching, working towards success and striking a balance between work and life. These reciprocal partnerships benefit the ‘protégé’ but also the ‘mentor’.

## **Part 2**

### **Methodology**

This paper uses an exploratory, multiple, qualitative case study approach in a real world setting. The overarching aim is to present a comparative case study of women from Rwanda and Australia. It is intended to give a 'voice' to the participants - female graduates from the first cohort of the Master in Gender and Development class and women migrants in Australia - as it is important for their story to be heard in their own words. Therefore a case study approach was the methodology of choice as its main characteristics help bring the realities of the participant experiences to the reader and because it is a method which is now widely employed in social science research studies (Longden, 2001; Noor, 2008). The key components of a case study approach are: first it taps into the viewpoints of the participants, second, it allows participant an avenue to describe their experiences in their own words, third, it is the preferred methodology when there is a need to "closely examine contemporary events" (Yin, 2003, p. 7).

The participants are seven women from Rwanda and ten migrant women from Western Australia (WA). The purposive sample of women were represented in government, academia, the private sector, community, civil society and not-for-profit organisations and ranged in age from late twenties to the fifties. They were approached to take part in the study as they were students in the first cohort of Master in Gender and Development offered at the Kigali Institute of Education, Rwanda and the migrant women in WA were known among WA migrant and women's networks and had made a difference to the institutions they work for, the communities they belong to, and also played a role in empowering other women. Underpinned by the theoretical frameworks of resilience and empowerment, each woman presented personal case narratives.

Seven Rwandan women had already been interviewed for brief life stories in 2011 and were asked to review these and elaborate on any issues of empowerment, resilience, family and mentoring that they had already shared. Ten migrant women living in Western Australia were provided with a guiding template to write and share their story. They provided their life histories using the themes and shared some photographs that are presented below.

#### **All women briefly commented on their:**

- **Family:** different role models while growing up, current family (children, household roles);
- **Educational experiences:** high-school and university;
- **Professional career:** current job, challenges faced, future career goals;

- **Mentoring:** Mentors and current mentees;
- **Examples** of empowerment, resilience that they could share

### **Data Analysis**

The life histories were based around the concepts of family, empowerment, resilience and mentoring. The researchers read the narratives provided by the participants to gain familiarity with the stories. Initial coding provided themes without losing the context of the participants' narratives (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000). To increase the credibility of this study and present participant voices, the narratives were shared as written by the women them with some minor editing (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

### **Part Three**

#### **Background: Rwanda and Rwandan Women**

Rwanda is a small densely populated, land-locked country located in Central East Africa, surrounded by Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania and Uganda. It is a member of both the East African Community (EAC) and the Commonwealth. It is notorious because of the tragic 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in which nearly one million people were brutally murdered and nearly 500,000 women raped. General Paul Kagame, who headed the army that eventually liberated Rwanda from the genocidaires is nearing his second term as President. He has been a firm and popular leader inside Rwanda, with zero corruption and a zero gender-based violence policies. Under his direction Rwanda has seen amazing economic growth, reduction in poverty, and significant improvement in health, education and agriculture.

Rwanda is a now multi-party democracy with two houses of parliament: the Chamber of Deputies, in which 64 percent of parliamentarians are women, and the Senate, the upper house in which 36 percent are women. The Government of Rwanda is committed to gender equality in all areas of public and private life and is proud of both long- and short-term development policies and strategies, which significantly address gender issues. These are the *National Constitution* (Republic of Rwanda, 2003),<sup>i</sup> *Vision 2020* (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2000),<sup>ii</sup> the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (PRSP) (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2002),<sup>iii</sup> the *Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) 1* (Government of Rwanda, 2007),<sup>iv</sup> *EDPRS 2* (Republic of Rwanda, 2013a),<sup>v</sup> the *National Gender Policy* (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2010)<sup>vi</sup> as well as sector strategies in agriculture, health, education and others, for example the *National Accelerated Plan on Women, Girls,*

*Gender Equality and HIV in Rwanda, 2010-2014* (Republic of Rwanda, 2010a)<sup>vii</sup> and the *Girls' Education Policy* (Ministry of Education, 2008).<sup>viii</sup>

Rwanda has now virtually achieved universal primary school enrolment and government policy is that all children should have compulsory free secondary education to year 12. Initiatives to increase early childhood education and tertiary and vocational education and training are in place. Much of the remarkable trajectory of progress in Rwanda can be attributed to the contribution of women to reconciliation, peace and reconstruction. Women not only hold a majority in Parliament but also are significantly represented in senior positions of the Ministry, the Judiciary and the Public Service. Government departments for many years have supported gender focal points. In 2009 the need for gender theory to underpin the widespread gender practice was recognised and CGCD was established in KIE, now the Centre for Gender Studies of the College of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Rwanda.

The participants in this section are the 2011 foundation graduates of the MGD program at CCGD. Case studies are presented of their contribution to women's empowerment in Rwanda and abroad in the areas of politics, public service, private sector, civil society (national and international NGOs) and consultancy. How they have made a difference to their families, their work places, the communities they belong to, their country and the world, and particular instances of their empowerment, resilience, or peer mentoring are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: A Snapshot Profile of Foundation Graduates of Master of Gender and Development in Rwanda**

**Marie Odette Kasanga Ndahiro, Independent Consultant, Rwanda**

**Marie Odette** is 47 years old. She is first-born in a family of two girls and four boys in Gatsibo District in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. Her parents were both elders of their families and educators in primary schools. Marie Odette's favourite games included football and spear throwing, which were not deemed to be girls' games. Her father was her personal trainer and wanted her to be sufficiently strong both spiritually and physically to defend herself. He specifically mentioned that he did not want anybody to be able to hurt her just because she was a girl, and he wanted her to 'go as high as the sky can limit'.

**Education:** Marie Odette was always among the best in her primary and secondary schooling and studied economics. The 1994 genocide disrupted her higher education, which she stopped in order to support her younger siblings. She was fortunate to survive the killing but had many narrow escapes. Marie Odette graduated as a Certified Accountant in the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants in 2007. Her Master in Gender and Development thesis fulfilled a long-term dream to write on the 1994 atrocities as a Rwandan genocide survivor, making public the voices of raped and impregnated women on genocide rape and its consequences. She believes she has capacity to go up to PhD level like her two brothers.

**Employment:** Marie Odette has a record of good jobs in international organisations – the World Health Organisation, the German Development Agency and the US Embassy. Since her graduation, Marie Odette had a political appointment as Deputy Chair of the National Electoral Commission and won a Senate campaign election. She is currently a consultant and member of a reproductive health rights consortium in Rwanda. Marie Odette’s research has won her a position in the body of Rwandan academic researchers, mainly university professors, academicians, research agencies, and media journalists in the National Centre for the Fight against Genocide. She participates in debates on research papers on genocide, transitional justice, international laws, governance and corruption as a member of a group that meets monthly. Marie Odette believes she has the ability to study to PhD level. **Family and Mentors:** Marie Odette married in 1995 and has three children. Three important people who helped form her character were her paternal great-grandmother, paternal grandfather and maternal grandmother. The President of the Rwandan republic is Marie Odette’s political mentor and three of her MGD lecturers: Professor Shirley Randell, Dr Anne Marie Hilsdon and Professor Gertrude Fester are her ‘beloved academic mentors always.’

**Impacts of her studies:** Following Marie Odette’s graduation the traditional rules and expectations of her household have positively changed. Her neighbours have had an opportunity to understand and apply some behavioural attitudes and commitment to gender equality. Her community believes in her studies cause. The Akilah Institute for Women invites her for public speeches and she is one of their women mentors. Her confidence and perspective have greatly improved.



**Marie Odette Kasanga Ndahiro**

**Egidia Rukundo, Senior Gender Specialist, African Development Bank**

**Egidia Rukundo** is 33 years old. She was born in Byimana Rwanda in 1981, the fourth in a family of six children, five girls and one boy. Her father and mother were farmers. They did not have the opportunity to complete schooling because of political discrimination and suffered because of this, so were very motivated to make sure that all of their children had a very good education. Egidia's mother and other family relatives were killed in the 1994. The rest of the family escaped because they were held in Kabgayi ghetto for Tutsis; it was like a concentration camp for the Jews. Every day, Interahamwe came to kill and rape women and girls. The young and still strong men were the first targeted by the killers, leaving the rest to die of starvation. The Rwanda Patriotic Front arrived on 2 June 1994, before all were killed.

**Education:** Egidia went to the Marist Brothers Schools for both primary and secondary and was one of few girls studying at the Byimana School of Science. Afterwards, she studied sociology in Kigali Independent University, and graduated with a bachelor's degree with first class honours. Later she received a scholarship to go to Alexandria in Egypt from 2007 to 2009 to complete a two-year Master in Development Studies degree with a speciality in projects management. All of Egidia's sisters and brother have gone to university, but she was the first to do a master's degree. Three of her siblings have now completed master's degrees.

**Employment:** Egidia started to become interested in gender issues when she was at university in 2003, working in a temporary job as a data collector on a project for fighting gender based violence for the

International Rescue Committee. She then worked as a trainer of trainers in gender with the Forum of Activists against Torture FACT Rwanda), Africare International as Education Specialist and ActionAid International as the National Project Coordinator, to fight GBV in and around schools. After graduating with her Master of Projects Management degree, Egidia began work as the Gender Cluster Coordinator of the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF). She developed the passion to work as an international staff member in 2006 and, after applying for several positions in 2013, was appointed Senior Gender Specialist (SGS) with the African Development Bank (AfDB). Her goal is to work in management as a representative at higher level of an international organisation or UN agency.

**Family:** Egidia married in 2010 and her husband has been very supportive of her studies. She was pregnant when studying for her MGD and is now a mother of a three-year old daughter.

**Impact of her studies:** Egidia joined the master's program so that she could have a theoretical understanding of her gender practice. Her research thesis is on culture and sexuality, particularly looking at attitudes and considerations of labia minora elongation. This work has been published. The MDG at KIE qualified Egidia to be SGS at AfDB as it was one the requirements for selection. She is now interested in conducting research on the role of involving women in decision-making positions in the organisation. As SGS in the AfDB, Egidia is responsible for gender mainstreaming in the Bank's operations, and participates in preparation and appraisal missions to conduct gender analyses and propose specific activities to promote gender equality and empower women. She also acts as peer reviewer of projects concept notes and projects appraisal reports.

**Mentors:** From February 2015, Egidia has had a mentor, Dr Victoria Chisala, the Division Manager at AfDB, who coaches her and guides her on career development and how to deal with international work environment and family. She also has a role model, Ms Geraldine J. Fraser-Moleketi, the Special Envoy on Gender at the AfDB. Other role models in the past have included the Representative of Africare Rwanda in 2006, Mr Obura Willis, the first international staff member she met and who inspired her on "being an international staff member," and her Rwandan Minister of Gender and Family Promotion, for her simplicity, tenacity and passion on gender and women's empowerment.



**Egidia Rukundo**

**Angelina Muganza, Executive Secretary, Public Service Commission, Rwanda**

**Angelina Muganza** is 56 years old. She was born in the Eastern Province in Rwanda the last child in a family of four sisters and two brothers. Her father was a trader in merchandise and her mother was a housewife and cultivator, who later became a small businesswoman, owning property, cows and goats. The family left their home after Angelina's father was one of the first people to be killed in 1962, progressively moving until they reached Uganda in 1964. Most Rwandans who took refuge in Uganda after 1959 had lost all their cows to the militia but on reaching Uganda some of them became cattle keepers and lived together with other Ugandan citizens. One of Angelina's aunties, her father's sister advised her mother not to stay in the refugee camp because she thought Angelina needed to drink milk. Her mother left the camp for two years, but later she returned to the refugee camp which had better schooling facilities and where Kinyarwanda was taught as the first language so Angelina could go to school, beginning primary school in 1966. She completed high school in Uganda and concluded her tertiary education in agriculture in 1982.

Angelina's mother was more hard-working than the men, and their wives and her children were never hungry and never deprived and were so happy. They never heard her complaining about anything. Although there was no water and no electricity, people were very kind to each other and had to look after each other. Rwandans were very industrious and very competitive despite some hardships. Some people managed to bring over their cows and began cultivation. They had access to schools, dispensaries and churches and led quite a dynamic life.

**Family:** Angelina married in 1987 when she was almost 30 and lived in Kenya where she worked in ActionAid Kenya from 1988 to 1994. They had four children in Kenya, three boys and a girl. Angelina still had many relatives in Rwanda when the 1994 genocide started: her father's and mother's sisters and brothers and cousins, their children and grandchildren, about 300 of them, with wives and cousins and so many were killed.

**Employment:** In 1995 Angelina came back to Rwanda and worked in agriculture from 1997-99, then as Minister for Gender from 1999 to 2002, after as Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour, and then as Executive Secretary in the Public Service Commission from 2008 where she is still working.

**Mentor:** Angelina's strong hard-working mother was her first great role model and mentor. Another was Doreen Drake, a teacher and career mistress at that school who particularly assisted Rwandan girls and boys to get scholarships from various benefactors, handling the fund that paid for school fees and guiding the students. She was a very strong woman, very kind, who loved them and so much wanted them to be disciplined. Doreen used to tell the girls that she had chosen to be single because of her religious faith and was influenced by Pope Pius who called young people to come to teach children in Africa. Angelina was surprised to find there were women like her in Africa.

**Angelina's master's research:** The subject of her Master's thesis was the changing gender roles in Rwanda from 1962 to 2012. Angelina noticed how gender roles changed during the refugee situation when men were without land and cattle and lost those things that made them heads of families. These factors had a negative effect on some men who become idle as they did not get to do what they were used to. The research showed that gender roles have changed more in the public domain than in the private domain. During hardship or times of survival, women take up gender roles that are traditionally allocated to men but fewer men take up gender roles traditionally apportioned to women. Angelina's research also showed that in the families where men and women share all roles, their children emulate them and the families progress more and have fewer conflicts. Finally the research showed that more younger men were willing to take up gender roles apportioned to women than older men. Thus she concluded that gender equality should be taught at home, in the community, in religious gatherings and in schools.

**Impact of her studies:** Angelina is looking forward to engaging in adult education particularly engaging women in the use of modern communication technologies while learning how to read and write. She is also interested in promoting gender education in schools targeting teachers and pupils.



**Angelina Muganza**

**Shamsi Kazimbaya, National Coordinator, Mancare+, Rwanda Men's Resources Centre**

**Shamsi Kazimbaya** is 39 years old. She was born in Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, the first born with one brother and seven sisters. Her parents left Rwanda in 1959. Shamsi's father was a very hard working small businessman in Zaire, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, so at first the family had a relatively good life. Her mother stayed at home doing household chores. In 1992 there were political tensions in DRC and the family left for Tanzania. Shamsi stayed in DRC with her sister to finish their secondary studies in a Francophone school till 1994. Shamsi was a role model to her young sisters - her father used to show them her school reports because she performed very well, always being first or second in the class. The children all received additional education from their parents who helped them to behave with discipline and respect, to be polite with other people and most importantly to worship Allah and be good Muslims.

**Education:** Shamsi began studying public administration at the University of Rwanda in 1995, graduating with a Bachelor in Public Administration in 2000. She was challenged to be the only Muslim in her CGCD class and wrote her MGD thesis on the practice of polygamy in Muslim communities and its effects on women's lives. She would like to go on to do a PhD.

**Employment:** Shamsi began work in a senior management position as a District Executive Secretary and moved to be the Coordinator of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) in Butare Province before being promoted as Director of Planning for NURC in Kigali. She had always wanted to work with women and became Secretary of SWAAR, a pan-African organisation dedicated to women and their families in the fight against HIV and AIDS from 2006 to 2012. In 2013, Shamsi was appointed the National Coordinator of MenCare+ for the Rwanda Men's Resource Centre and works at engaging men as caregiving partners in health and ending GBV.

**Family:** Shamsi married in 2008 and has two daughters, five years and two years old. The critical thinking she developed in her MGD studies means she always sees things in a gender perspective so has some challenges with her husband's behaviour in their relationship.

**Mentors:** Shamsi's two main role models are an older man who has worked with the UN for more than 15 years and has supported in her professional, academic and day-to-day life, and Prof Shirley Randell, who Shamsi has shared her thoughts and feelings with after hearing Prof Shirley talk to students about the way she had managed her own children and other problems. Shamsi mentors her own young sisters and is encouraged to see in them a sense of empowerment, commitment, self-resilience and determination toward growing into powerful women.

**Empowerment and Resilience** Feeling more confident and empowered with her MGD, Shamsi travels widely and both in Rwanda and other countries speaks and presents at various meetings and conferences as well as to specific group gatherings in the community. Her opinions on gender, gender equality and women's empowerment are shared and published in newspapers, radios and TV.



**Shamsi Kazimbaya**

### **Anne Abakunzi, Bank Manager, Banque Populaire**

**Anne Abakunzi** is 50 years old. She was born in Uganda, the first of seven children, four girls and three boys. Her parents were peasants working in agriculture who left Rwanda as refugees in 1961. Like almost everyone, in the first year they did not have cows, but after a while they did. Anne's family was very religious. Her grandfather was a catechist, and many people came to their home for teaching and praying together. Even at the age of eight she was involved in teaching others.

**Education:** Anne started primary in Uganda, in a school mainly for refugees that started as a Catholic school but later became a government school. She had to walk very many kilometres to reach the school, passing two other schools, just because they were Protestant schools. She went to Maryhill High School for both 'O' level and 'A' level and started tertiary education at Nkumba University, a private one, graduating with a Bachelor in Accounting and Business Studies degree.

**Community Involvement and Empowerment:** The family returned to Rwanda in 1994, after the genocide. Together with other women friends, they started Benishyaka association, as they wanted to help widows and orphans after the 1994 atrocities. Many of those orphans are university graduates now.

**Employment:** Anne worked at Concern Worldwide for two years as an administrator and then as an accountant in the legal department of BCR, the Commercial Bank of Rwanda, transferring to Ruhengeri as an acting branch manager before finishing her studies at the School of Finance and Banking. After further banking assignments she moved to Bank Populaire that was established

especially for women by an association of women entrepreneurs. Anne was later transferred to the head office to start a women's window that would cater for women's business in the whole bank network. She is currently working as a deputy director general in the Workforce Development Authority, an institution that is charged with creating jobs through skills development.

**Mentors:** Anne's own most important role models are her mother and the President of Rwanda, but she greatly admires many of her customers, some not well educated but they are just convinced that they can do something so they have incredible stories. They are focused and inspiring and want to go on to higher levels even without education. Anne is a mentor and supervisor of members of the Workforce Development Authority Gender Task Force, including representatives of Integrated Polytechnic Regional Colleges.

**Family:** Anne met her husband in Uganda, married in 1999 and they had a son. Unfortunately her husband had hepatitis C and went to South Africa for treatment, returning to Rwanda when doctors suggested a transplant. He died in 2004 when he was 50. They had three children, now 23, 19 and 11.

**Future:** Anne would like to study economic empowerment of women, perhaps for a PhD. Her passion is to find the solution to all this violence against women, and to end this war in their homes at night. When visitors come to these families the women behave as culture requires them to. When they are able to look after themselves they keep quiet and don't tell anyone, because even if they are not OK, their men will not change and it is a shame for them. Anne also encourages women to enrol for skills that are relevant on the market and almost always on demand. She advises and where necessary accompanies women for assistance to combat violence and with bankable projects.



**Anne Abakunzi**

### **Donatha Gihana, Acting Country Director, Girl Hub Rwanda**

**Donatha Gihana** was born in Uganda Kampala, the first in a family of six, two girls and four boys. Her parents were refugees, having left Rwanda in 1970. In 1980 her father moved to Uganda, joining other family members who had already gone there. He had a men's suits store in the capital and was one of a community of Rwandans who had joined hands to own the store. Donatha's mother did small jobs, selling clothes and food for cash because she was determined her children's school fees would always be paid on time so they would not be chased out of school. The family returned to Rwanda in 1996. Donatha's father was from Nyanza and only one cousin was left from her paternal relatives, who were all killed in the genocide. Many of her maternal relatives were also killed.

**Education:** Donatha attended elementary, primary and secondary government-aided private missionary schools in Kampala until Secondary 3. She was a good student, always achieving one of the first three top positions in the class. Donatha went into Secondary 3 at the Rwanda international academy, a mixed school with a mixture of subjects, not only sciences, and it was there that her activism for women started. She was among the best students, studying and competing with boys. When it came to participation in school clubs and other key events she found she was one of the few girls taking the lead.

**Inspiration:** After Donatha completed high school she was posted to KIE. While waiting to join, she thought about what she would do to help other girls. She listened to the BBC on Radio Rwanda and learned about the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) program. At the age of 18 Donatha had an opportunity to be a volunteer at the FAWE office. That facilitated her experience of being connected with Rwandan women leaders and learning more about gender-related issues.

**Community Involvement:** When Donatha was 19 years, the first thing she did at the end of the school year was to enrol in computer lessons. FAWE gave her a computer and she practised the skills. She was then hired to do reports for other meetings, and gained both typing and Internet skills. Donatha was elected in Year 1 as the first KIE Gender Commissioner, which built her activism in the university. Studying at KIE in Kigali gave her an opportunity to go back to FAWE every holiday and she would be paid. Donatha started working hard and was exposed to the world of women's issues and activism. Before she graduated she was offered membership of FAWE and then appointed Coordinator, so paid back to the organisation that had received her as a volunteer at 18 years of age. She is now the Acting Country Director of Girl Hub Rwanda.

**Family:** Donatha met her husband on a bus on their way to and from church and they married in July

2007. She decided to marry because she had graduated, started working and wanted to be independent, but the only way she could move out of home and get her own things was to be married. Donatha went into this relationship with one principle, saying she would not diminish her activism. She knew she could not lose herself and had to stay as Donatha. She respects her husband but will not forgo something that impacts on her professional growth. Good enough, her husband is understanding, and the momentum she began with is continuing. Rwandan society is both matriarchal and patriarchal, and Donatha could not be independent with her brothers in the house, and could not hang out with her friends till 1pm. She would let dad know she would be out, but would have to be home by 10 or midnight, even though she was a 25-year-old woman who had graduated. Donatha's family and friends were so surprised about her marriage, because they saw her as someone who liked to study and thought she would have a master's degree before she married. Her parents are very happy now because she completed her master's degree and they love their grandchildren. Her children are now 7, 6 and 1 year. **Mentors:** Donatha's mother was a great role model for her, from then up to today. What has kept her strong is her parents' acceptance of her. Donatha could stand firm on her decision because she had never done anything alarming in the family that caused mistrust. She has always been an example to the young ones. Donatha has two other women as her mentors: Anne Gahongayire who supported her enter the world of working for girls and women, and Prof Shirley Randell who has helped her to grow professionally in this field.

**Future:** Donatha does not regret doing a bachelor's degree and then a master's degree in gender. Her passion is gender, and she really wants to be an expert in it. Being passionate about it is not enough without knowledge, the studying of concepts, and the academic work of gender. She would like to go on to complete a PhD in gender or a related field.



### **Jane Umutoni, Lecturer, College of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Rwanda**

**Jane Umutoni** is the last-born in a loving and close family of six children with three sisters and two brothers with a number of nieces and nephews. Her formative years were spent in Uganda and she has fond memories of her childhood there and later in Kenya where she had her post-secondary and vocational education. Her initial working experience was in Kenya in the private sector. Despite the fact that the family was living in exile, it felt to Jane like home away from home and she cherishes those memories. Jane returned to Rwanda for good in 2001, and found this was one of the most wonderful experiences in her life. It was like finally coming home where she truly belonged; no more words like 'refugee', 'stateless' or 'foreigner' and she was happy to come home to be part of the efforts to rebuild her beloved country. Rwandans are still doing the same today and their joint efforts are amazingly paying off. Jane is very proud to be called a Rwandan.

**Mentors & Family:** Jane's main mentor and role model was the eldest daughter in her family, tripling as her big sister, mother and friend, teaching her much of what she knows, which has determined who she is today. There are many qualities that she borrowed from her sister that have positively steered her through life. Jane in turn tries to be a role model for her daughter as best as she can. Just as she was mentored by her lecturers during her Masters studies, she hopes to do the same for students under her charge at the University of Rwanda as well. Jane is a mother to a wonderful daughter who is her joy and pride.

**Education:** Jane began her academic career with a Bachelor of Business Studies as a government employee in a public institution of higher learning. This inspired her to upgrade her qualifications through observing colleagues growing academically and then finding herself lagging behind. She began to ask herself, "What about me?" and became motivated to grow professionally. She switched from her Business Studies background when the Master of Social Sciences in Gender and Development was introduced at KIE, the first of its kind in the whole country. The promotion of gender equality is a top priority in Rwanda and Jane thought, "Wow this is a God-sent gift to me and many other Rwandans". While growing up, the issue of gender inequality had never crossed her mind, because in her family setting, all children were treated equally. However, as she became older Jane began to witness gender inequalities all around her and they were just treated as being normal. Jane grabbed the opportunity with both hands, dropped the MBA idea and registered for the MGD. She was selected among the 50 pioneers and has never regretted that decision, feeling privileged, honoured and dignified to be part of the pioneer group.

**Future:** For her Master's thesis Jane chose to research on *Womens' Cooperatives as a Tool of Nurturing Women's Entrepreneurship and Promoting Reconciliation in Rwanda*, a contribution to 'Women Entrepreneurship' that has always been an area of personal interest. The business sector in Rwanda is currently buzzing with women involved in all sorts of businesses, both at small and large- scale levels and this brings joy to her heart. Jane hopes to utilize the valuable knowledge acquired the best way she can in a continued joint effort to develop her country. Currently Jane is a registered PhD fellow at the University of the Free State in South Africa, where she was awarded the Prestige Doctoral Scholarship.



**Jane Umutoni**

#### **Part Four**

##### **Immigration policies of Australia: a brief historical overview**

Any account of Australian history is incomplete without mention of the traditional owners of the land, the Aboriginal people and their traditions, that form part of a history that dates back at least 50,000 thousand years. Present day Australia is an immigrant society, it differs from other such societies, such as America or Canada, in that its population, has been the product of government policies, rather than private enterprise, that set out to attain specific models of immigration and society (Jupp, 2002). At different times the migration programme has also reflected the economic and social conditions prevalent in Australia.

### **The White Australia policy and its history of exclusion**

The infamous '*White Australia*' policy, which was adopted in 1901 by the new commonwealth government following federation of the separate colonies of Australia, formalised attitudes to immigration that had emerged during the 1850s. During WW2, Japan's aggression towards Australia had contributed to this defensive stand, as Australia subsequently felt obliged to protect itself from the perceived threat of countries in neighbouring Asia. By 1947 it was estimated that, excluding the Indigenous population, non- Europeans accounted for less than 0.25% of the Australian population (Jupp, 2002).

### ***Towards multiculturalism and the boom***

Migrants from non-European countries began to increase in numbers after the Fraser government came to power in 1975 and followed a revival of the immigration program which was fuelled by the boom in Australia's mineral industry. There was now a need for skilled migrants to improve the country competitiveness in the international market (Birrell, 2003). Migrant groups were encouraged to set up state and national associations to promote the continuity of their cultures, languages and heritages. This change in policy was largely the result of lobbying by ethnic communities, pressuring the government to address their needs. Subsequently multiculturalism was adopted as social policy (Earnest, 2009).

### ***Skilled migration and changes to Australian immigration policy***

In 1978, a comprehensive review of immigration in Australia was undertaken. Policies and programs were designed with a view to strengthening Australia's population development and shaping it for the future. The selection of migrants became more structured with an increased importance on attracting people who would contribute to the Australian economy and way of life. In 1986, an 'Independent' category was established to attract young migrants. Applicants who wished to migrate under this category were required to fulfil criteria pertaining to proficiency in the English language and professional qualifications. This led to an overwhelming entry of highly educated migrants and the arrival of overseas students, mainly from Asia.

### ***Multicultural Australia & Immigration as a tool for nation building***

At the end of World War II, Australia's population was just over 7 million, with around 90 per cent born in Australia. At the time of the 2011 Census, Australia's population was 21 million, with nearly one in four people living in Australia born overseas; 43 per cent of all Australians were born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014). The

economic wealth and cultural diversity that places Australia in the ranks of the developed OECD countries of the world today have been made possible due to the remarkable contributions of international migrants. Through the years, Australia's evolving immigration policy has been reshaped according to the needs of the country. Starting with a need to solve critical labour shortages, in the early years of settlement, the needs of Australia shifted to achieving population growth in the 1950s and 1960s, to providing the country with the skilled professionals needed to enable Australia to become globally competitive. Migrants in Australia have built a dynamic and multicultural society, with each ethnic community contributing richly to the success and prosperity of the larger community of which they have become an inextricable and invaluable part. Migrant women too have played an important part in shaping this multicultural landscape and have contributed in diverse ways. The next section presents the stories of 10 migrant women from Western Australia.

**Table 2: Narratives of Migrant Women in Western Australia**

**From former Vietnamese refugee and multiple award-winning author and publisher & tireless advocate – Carina Hoang**

**Carina Hoang** is a former Vietnamese refugee and multiple award-winning author and publisher. Since the publication of her first book in 2011, *Boat People: Personal Stories from the Vietnamese Exodus 1975-1996*, Carina has been sought after to participate in seminars, and debates as a guest speaker or panellist, within WA, nationally and internationally.

**Seeking refuge:** At the age of sixteen Carina escaped Vietnam on a wooden boat with her two siblings and 370 other people. She survived the harrowing journey and the extreme challenges of the journey and a primitive refugee camp. The Hoang children were accepted for resettlement in the United States.

**Education:** Over the next 20 years, Carina continued her education, and had a successful career. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry at Rosemont College, Pennsylvania, an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Gender and Cultural Studies at Murdoch University, and a Master of Business Administration at California State University, Pomona. She went on to hold management positions in the semiconductor, biotechnology, manufacturing and healthcare industries in the areas of marketing, human resources and administrative management.

**Empowerment and Advocacy:** Carina is a fearless and influential advocate for the rights of asylum

seekers and refugees and an inspiration to other advocates. She uses her direct experience to inform and persuade. She helps Australians to understand the issues surrounding contemporary asylum seekers who have arrived by boat, by sharing the experiences of Vietnamese boat people in public forums and with students and adults. Not only her personal story impresses, but her clear advocacy for all refugees, asylum seekers and detained people on and off shore, gain her a most attentive audience. She is therefore recognized to be a very effective educator on human rights and justice.

However all her advocacy is not done in the public spotlight; she spends a great deal of her time behind the scenes also, in putting forward a case for a particular individual/family as well working with others on changing systems. No matter the forum Carina is a forceful though quiet voice for the rights of refugees – and indeed other minorities-and emphasizes the human rights of dignity and fairness according to law.

**Helping Community:** One of her achievements is the voluntary assistance she gives to the families of former Vietnamese refugees who lived through hell on uninhabited Indonesian islands. Many family members died there before they reached safety, due to hunger, illnesses and violence. Families from different parts of the world, especially Australia and USA have contacted her to help search for the graves of loved ones. And from careful, respectful interviews related to these harrowing searches she has been able to assist people find graves of family members and be able to grieve as they were formerly unable to do. Carina is a woman of great integrity and works tirelessly to promote social justice, especially for refugees and asylum seekers, no matter which country they are from. Her voice is made all the more authentic as she has lived the experience.

**Following the publication of her book *Boat People: Personal Stories from the Vietnamese Exodus 1975-1996* in 2011 she has received many awards, including:**

- **2011: Induction into the WA Women's Hall of Fame**
- 2012: Independent Publisher Book Awards for Best Regional Non-Fiction (Australia and New Zealand), nominated for the Human Rights Book Award, and short listed for the WA Premiere Book Award.
- 2012: Finalist for Murdoch University 2012 Distinguished Alumni Award.
- 2012: Appointed as Special Representative to the UN Refugee Agency's Australian charity, Australia for UNHCR.
- 2013 Independent Publisher Book Awards for Best Regional Non-Fiction (Australia and New Zealand) for her third book, *Permanent Impressions*.
- 2014: Ambassador for Refugee Week [Refugee Council of Australia] Carina's story can be found at [www.carinahoang.com](http://www.carinahoang.com)



**From Zimbabwe to a establishing a business in Perth, Western Australia**  
**Grace Mugabe**

**My community contribution:** As soon as I finished university and was earning an income, I joined Rotary and was elected club treasurer. Our club helped to fundraise money for a number of causes including the devastating Black Saturday bush fires – a dark time in Australia’s history. In 2012, I won a scholarship to participate in a Young Women’s Leadership Program funded by the Department of

women into community organizations.

(<https://connect2culture.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/ywlp toolkit.pdf>)

Through doing this life changing program, I was introduced to ISHAR Multicultural Women's Health Center of which I sit on the board of management, and chair its Audit and Finance committee. I also sit on the board of Emergen – as Treasurer – a collaborative community for young emerging leaders to develop their leadership skills and knowledge to create positive social change in the broader community. Lastly, I am in the Advisory Committee of 100 Women a philanthropic giving circle, which enables everyday people to be involved in creating a world where all women and girls can live safely with access to health, education and economic freedom. In my current place of employment I've organized a couple multicultural bring and share morning tea events to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity which the organization and Western Australia possesses.

**Family:** A few years ago, Zimbabwe went through economic turmoil which meant that I had to step up in providing financial support for my immediate family. This entailed putting my brothers who were in Australia and the United States through university. I'm proud to say that they have now completed and graduated from their studies and are both working in their chosen fields.

**Empowerment, resilience, or peer mentoring:** When I visit Zimbabwe, I always take with me supplies which can be used by the less fortunate in my home town. Basic supplies can often be hard to come by for those who do not have a means. Financial provision is an ongoing support I offer as and when I can, to under privileged widows and elderlies who are really struggling to make ends meet, particularly in the current economic situation there. I also have had one on one financial empowerment sessions with women who own their own businesses in Gweru, Zimbabwe to provide assistance in understanding the financial health of their business. It is quite rewarding when I hear back from them a few months later to update me to the changes they have made as a result of the advice I have given them. In my business I teach women how to understand how well their businesses are doing financially. I run workshops on 'Understanding Financial Statements' to allow women to give organisations that they are involved with – be it their own or NFPs that they volunteer for – a basic financial health check.

**Family:** This may sound like a bit of a cliché but my parents are my role models. They have been through a lot of hardships including living through the apartheid era in South Africa but remain of strong, forgiving character. From as far as I can remember, they were both actively involved in community programs and would take my brother and I along particularly to organisations which involved homeless and orphaned kids so we would appreciate what we had.

When I was in high school my mom used to sit with me as she did her monthly budget. It gave me a sense of respect for money. In turn my dad would speak to me about the investments he had and returns

he would make from them. This together with the community work they took me to implanted and nurtured my passion for empowering women in understanding their finances, bringing diverse cultures together and the plight of less fortunate women and children.

I have two younger brothers and we were raised by our mother, a South African of Swazi decent and our father, a Zimbabwean. My parents continue to make a difference in their community by educating young girls and women who otherwise would not have be given the opportunity. This inspires me with the business I am running here in Australia. Despite my siblings and I living in 3 different continents and my parents in a 4<sup>th</sup> our family has remained as tight knit as we've always been and all continue to be involved deeply in our respective communities.

**Educational experiences:** I moved to Australia to complete an Accounting degree and obtained a Certified Practicing Accountant (CPA) qualification. When I first arrived in Australia, I used to be told by fellow Africans that I could only get a '*cleaning job*' because of my race. This contradicted everything my parents had taught me by saying 'I can do and be anything I want to be'. I have since worked for a range of corporations including several industry leading multinationals in a professional capacity. I am currently going through a transition of leaving my corporate job to realise my lifelong dream of running my own business which brings together my passions for helping other women and finances. My business, called **Consulting for Financial Empowerment** seeks to empower other women in small business and on boards with financial knowledge to instil financial independence and confidence.

**Mentoring:** I have had a number of mentors who have helped in various areas of my life – the most significant of those being my mother. I still to this day call upon her in my times of need. I've also read a number of autobiographies to learn from other people's challenges and to draw inspiration from their stories. At the moment, I am mentoring young emerging board members particularly those in the treasury roles. I have been able to foster my passion for giving back while living in Australia because I put myself out there and was open to the opportunities which were presented to me. Ignoring the nay sayers and allowing positive likeminded people in my life has empowered me and in turned empowered the women I connect with. Past experiences such as moving from the USA to Zimbabwe have helped me build resilience. My confidence and belief in my abilities have grown especially when I reflect upon the fact that I was just an 18 year old who came to Perth with just a suitcase to get a tertiary education. I believe with the right support and people around you, anyone can achieve anything, anywhere.



**Rabia Siddique –Fearless Humanitarian, Speaker, Author**

**Background:** Rabia Siddique was born in Perth, Australia and spent the first five years of her life in India. She is the eldest child of an Indian Muslim father and an Australian mother. In 1976 her family migrated to Perth where she then grew up, was educated and remained until her mid-twenties. Rabia's first experiences of social inequality and injustice were at a young age when she witnessed first-hand the

tender and vulnerable age of nine she also experienced abuse for the first time, which quickly robbed her of her childhood and her innocence. These experiences undoubtedly informed decisions and choices Rabia later made in life.

**Education & Employment:** Rabia obtained a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws degrees from the University of Western Australia and started her legal career at Legal Aid WA, where she practised predominantly as a criminal defence lawyer. She then moved to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, where she became one of the youngest federal prosecutors in Australia. In 1998 Rabia moved to the United Kingdom and commissioned as a Legal Officer in the British Army, a rather unexpected career choice! Her career in the Army took her to England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Germany, Italy and the Middle East.

**Discrimination & fight against injustice & resilience:** Rabia later became the Army's recruitment "poster girl" by promoting equality and diversity within the British Armed Forces. In a terrifying ordeal, whilst deployed to Iraq in 2005 Rabia, along with a male colleague, assisted with the rescue of two Special Forces soldiers from Iraqi insurgents during a hostage situation that garnered worldwide attention. After the Iraq hostage incident Rabia's male colleague was awarded a Military cross for outstanding bravery for his part in the incident, while Rabia's involvement was covered up by the British Army and Tony Blair's Government. In her fight for justice she brought a landmark race and sex discrimination case against the UK Ministry of Defence. In 2008 Rabia left the British Armed Forces and went on to become a Crown Advocate in the British Counter Terrorism Division of the Crown Prosecution Service, which involved working on some of the most high profile terrorism and hate crime prosecutions, as well as advising on war crimes cases. This role also took Rabia to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

**Family:** In 2008 Rabia and her husband welcomed their precious triplet sons into the world. Parenting triplets was to become Rabia's biggest and most rewarding challenge yet! In 2011 Rabia decided to move to back to Australia in order to provide her family with a safe, balanced and healthy lifestyle. So far Australia has not disappointed! Rabia currently works as Senior Government Legal Counsel, whilst also juggling professional public speaking and facilitating engagements, the publication of her first **best-selling book, "Equal Justice"**, guest lecturing and tutoring at the University Western Australia and various television and radio appearances and interviews relating to her story and her work in promoting Women in Leadership, resilience, principle based leadership, equality and diversity in the workforce and the rights of women, children and ethnic minorities.

**Community accolades and involvement:** Rabia was awarded a Queen's Commendation for her humanitarian work in Iraq in 2006 and was Runner Up Australian Woman of the Year UK in 2009. In

2014 Rabia was a finalist in the Telstra Australian Business Women's Awards and was named as one of Australia's 100 most influential women. In October last year Rabia received a standing ovation from 1700 people at her TEDx talk entitled "Ripples and Waves" where she spoke about the power we all have as individuals to create the change we wish to see in this world. Rabia is a member of the Red Cross International Humanitarian Law Committee, UN Women Australia, Law Society of Western Australia Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Committee, Australian Institute of Management, Women on Boards Australia and is an Ambassador and Board Member of a number of Women and Children's based charities. Rabia believes passionately that education is the vaccine against violence, ignorance and oppression and has dedicated her life to inspiring and empowering others especially women to find their voice.



**From rural Northern Uganda to rural Australia: a story of education and empowerment of a black African woman - Dr Barbara Nattabi**

**Background:** Having migrated from Uganda to Australia just seven years ago, today Dr Barbara Nattabi is a senior lecturer at University of Western Australia, one of the top universities in Australia. With a degree in medicine, a Master's in public health from University of London and a PhD in International Health, Dr Nattabi is a past recipient of the highly prestigious Endeavour International Postgraduate Scholarship (2008-2011), and was recently awarded the highly competitive National Medical Health and Research Council Early Career Research Fellowship.

**Family:** However Barbara's accomplishments should not be a surprise considering the strong women and benevolent men in her life. Born 42 years ago to two young academics, Barbara's early formative education was in Canada and then later at one of the best Catholic boarding high schools in Uganda, where her mother was head girl almost 30 years before she was. Barbara was fortunate to be born into a family where female education was the norm and not the exception. Her maternal grandmother was a school teacher, all her aunts went to school and her main role model is her mother, one of the very first veterinary PhDs in Africa, who at 72 years of age is still a very busy academic at the University of Botswana. Her mother is the matriarch of her family, setting an example for Barbara and other women that a woman can achieve anything she sets her mind to. But these accomplishments wouldn't have happened if Barbara's grandfathers had not been men ahead of their time because many then did not see the importance of education for girls.

**Empowerment, community and mentoring:** But Barbara is more than a doctor, researcher and academic. She is a single mother of a strapping young 15 year old boy; she is a friend of many, a sister, an aunt, a grandmother, a mentor and an active community member in her rural town. Until recently she was a committee member on a local community organisation, the Midwest African Association whose purpose is to create a vibrant community of African Australians in the Midwest who positively impact the local community. As part of this organisation Barbara has positively contributed to the local community by participating in local community events including the largest African cook up for the Geraldton community; she is also a member of the African Professionals of Australia, a Not-for-Profit Organization that has the main function of upskilling and enabling African Professionals in Australia.

The purpose of the organisation is to create a vibrant community of African Australians and actively promotes migrants positive contributions and commitment to the growth of the Australian community.

~~She serves on several academic committees including The Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus~~

Applied Research and Evaluation Network (SiREN) Project Interest Group, the Vision CRC Continuous Quality Improvement Working Group, Brien Holden Vision Institute and WA Contact Tracing e-Learning Modules Expert Reference Group.

**Mentors & Mentoring:** For all her accomplishments, Barbara recognises that she is a product of all the different people from various walks of life who she has met on her journey, and these have served as her mentors and taught her to be resilient: from her female primary and secondary school teachers and high school principal, Sr Cephas Cormack, to the resilient women who she worked with in war-torn Northern Uganda, many of whom had very little in terms of material wealth and have experienced the horrors of war, to the AIDS patients with whom she interacted closely for many years, to the friends and de facto family that has formed around her in Australia, to the strong women at the local church she attends, to the strong women in her family who have overcome various odds to achieve what they have. Barbara's mentors, family and friends, her life and work experiences have informed her attitudes, and her passion for the marginalised and vulnerable. Prior to her migration to Australia Barbara spent ten years working in war torn Northern Uganda where she run one of the first Antiretroviral projects in a conflict zone and busiest AIDS clinics in Africa, serving over 10000 HIV-infected people. But more than the medications and Barbara emphasized **the importance of people, teamwork and mutual support.**

Barbara continues to support her colleagues in Africa, mentoring them and assuring them that despite challenges they face, they too can excel. Women and men she continues to mentor include doctors, nurses, family members and friends. Now in Australia, Barbara lives in rural Australia and her work focuses on Aboriginal Australians who despite living in a developed country face many similar challenges to those Barbara was familiar with in Africa. Though socially, culturally and historically different from the rural communities in Northern Uganda, Australian Indigenous communities are also severely disadvantaged in terms of access to education, employment, income, housing, among other services. Though still very early, Barbara hopes that the experiences she has attained will be transferable and relevant to the Indigenous communities in Australia.

**Education and empowerment:** An advocate for girl's education and empowerment, Barbara remains a strong advocate for the education and true empowerment of men, without whom women cannot achieve their full potential and true empowerment. Having experienced domestic violence herself, and having interacted with many women who have, Barbara recognises that the unilateral emphasis on the empowerment of the female child without dismantling of the structural barriers that undervalue women will not lead to women's true empowerment. So through her work, her social interactions, her support to friends and family and particularly within close relationships including that with her young son, Barbara works to contribute to true empowerment of both women and men to achieve full and lasting potential

so that all can positively contribute to the communities in which they live.



**Barbara and her son Paul at the Pinnacles in Western Australia**

## **From Iran to being a registered migration agent in Perth, Western Australia**

### **Mina Jafari**



**Contribution to the wider community:** One of my passions in life is to help people in the time of need. I enjoy helping people by providing them different type of services including community services, language and translation services or just providing them with information they need to adjust to the new country, new working environment and enable them to fit into the new society. As a bi-lingual migration agent, I have been approached by many people inside or outside Australia. My mission is to help them improve their quality of life by enabling them to come to Australia and establish a new life.

**Impact on the community, empowerment & resilience:** Through my job as a migration agent, I have helped many refugees settle in Australia in order to shorten the process of them sponsoring their families

and settle them to Australia. This way I empowered them to enjoy a better life and to reunion with their family as well as saving their family from living in danger and suffering from life disadvantage.

As refugees, my clients are mainly from male-dominated countries. I always provide them with advice regarding their family life, rights of their wives and daughters, and always encourage them to facilitate their female family members' education as a priority after their arrival in Australia. I also provide community services to my fellow Iranians by organizing gathering especially in our cultural occasions with the hope that they have an easier time being away from their families on those occasions.

**Family:** My very first priority in life is my family of a husband and two kids. I always foster a family environment to encourage my children's education and my husband's success at work.

**Education:** I studied BA in Political Science in Tehran university of Tehran and at the same time a BA in English Translation at Azad University, Tehran. I continued my post graduate studies in Australian Immigration Law and Practice at Murdoch University. I have also completed the New Zealand Immigration Law and Practice course with Australian National University.

**Professional career: current job, challenges, future:** I run my migration and translation business as a sole trader. My challenges in this job are to keep myself available for all my clients, update myself with regular changes, meet deadlines given by Department of Immigration, and also keep my high standard of quality services I provide to my clients. I like to work as a sole trader. I believe this way I have the chance to meet all my clients face to face and hear their stories. This way I can cater my services to them based on their need.

I am a member of Case for Refugees and Metropolitan Migration Centre. I have provided their clients with free consultation. I have attended detention centres to visit the refugees in need and have provided them with support as required. I also work with a multicultural group (from Japan, China, Nepal, Taiwan) in education sector to facilitate international students' education.

**My experiences of living in WA:** As a migrant, I started a hard life in Australia. Facing a new way of life with a completely different culture was hard to cope with. People of Australia were always kind to me but getting familiar with their way of thinking and living was a challenge. However, these days I consider myself as an Australian with a mission of getting my fellow Australians to be familiar with other parts of world.

**Andrea Creado**

**From India to Perth, Western Australia – CEO of a Multicultural Women’s Health Centre**

**Contribution to the wider community:** From a young age I relished the every opportunity to be involved with the wider community and contribute in some way to help others or to make a positive difference. In India I volunteered with the church on various projects like working with orphanages, old age homes, delivering sex education classes to high school students and counselling with couples. In Australia as a new migrant I continued my voluntary work with non-government organisations focusing on migrant and refugee women. I have also volunteered with the church cooking for seniors for events, with the school as a Chairperson of the Montessori school, member of various high school committees, as a Scout Leader, Manager of the soccer team and several other groups. I believe in sharing my time and talents with community and feel that whatever I do is never enough.

Through my work and personal life I have mentored several women who have come from various backgrounds. One of the women I mentored was a volunteer at work. She was in an abusive relationship and had two young children. Through counselling and gaining knowledge of the support available to her in the community she slowly gained the strength to make the decision to leave her abusive relationship. In the early days of her separation I gave her and her kids shelter in my home and she said after years she felt like she was being looked after. The journey of mentoring did not end with her separation but continues to this day on a weekly basis even ten years later. I admire this lady for what she has achieved- an accounting degree, a job, a house, ability to drive and has raised two fine young boys who are doing very well in school. This mentee often says when she is low and doubting herself she thinks of what I have often say to her –don’t think of the road ahead , look back and see how far you’ve come on your own. This always helps her gain the strength to carry on.

**Impact on community, empowerment, work place:** Through my work I have developed various projects that empower women to become independent, successful and contributing members of community. I have developed several programs that focus on women developing skills to enter workplace or establish small businesses and there are hundreds of women that have been impacted by these programs. In recognition of the work I have done Zonta International awarded me the ‘Woman of Achievement Award’ for work done to help further the empowerment of women. Under my leadership Ishar has grown

in strength being recognised for its work by government and community. In 2014 Ishar made 60,000 contacts with women from 60 different ethnicities. The top five major issues the women presented were mental health issues, family relationships, lack of housing, lack of employment skills and lack of life skills.

**Family, Education, Migration and Career:** I arrived in Australia in 2002 after growing up and studying in Nagpur, India before living and marrying in Bombay. I completed my Masters at Nagpur University, followed by a Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling Psychology from Xavier's Institute of counselling in Bombay. Expecting my first child, I began discussing with my husband the future of my family in India, concerned with the political and changing social environment. I decided to migrate to Australia, choosing Perth for the climate and an aunt here who would provide initial support. Despite the excitement of the new lifestyle, I had to grow accustomed to the quiet of the city, so abruptly different from the hustle and bustle of India. I relished the challenges of driving for the first time on Australian roads with gusto. I started work with the Ethnic Communities council, later completing an Honours Degree in Psychology and going on to become Director & CEO of Ishar, a women's health agency.

My experience of migration has been utterly empowering, testing the limits of my capabilities and strength of belief in myself. In my migration experience I faced many challenges – I taught myself to drive; I applied for over one hundred jobs and got rejected and was told by the employment agency that with no local experience I would never get a job in human services. I was told to get a job doing packing on a production line. With dwindling savings, a husband in India nursing his father and a small child I set myself only one goal-to get established in Australia. I began with voluntary work to get experience, eventually got a permanent job in 2003 and enrolled in University.

Through the years I have worked hard not taking a break to have my second child and have raised my family while working fulltime leading an organisation. I support my parents who live with me and am the first point of contact for all my family when they are in need. In **Ishar** I have found a cause in which I passionately believe and for which I advocate fervently – the empowerment and independence of women, particularly those from migrant and humanitarian backgrounds. My inspiration comes from the refugee women I work with every day. Like all not-for-profit, non-government organisations, Ishar faces a constant and competitive battle for funding, both for the core activities of the organisation and for additional projects and programs. It is my ongoing challenge to initiate the development and implementation of innovative and proactive programs addressing the particular settlement and other needs of the client group while at the same time complying with restrictive guidelines set by funding bodies.

My future goals are to get a Doctorate in Psychology, guide my children to establish responsible lives, to

expand my voluntary work to mentoring high school students, helping in hospitals and old age homes and to influence government policy in the areas of women's health and education so that there is a systemic change which will reduce domestic violence, homelessness and impoverishment of women.



Andrea with older European migrants on International Women's day

## **Part Five**

### **Conclusio**

**n**

The narratives of the seven women from Rwanda and ten women from Australia highlight strong parallels. All of the women have supportive families, especially parents who valued education and encouraged them get a university education. All of them also have or had supportive partners and husbands. The women from the first cohort of the MGD class in Rwanda and the ten migrants in Australia are passionate community advocates and play a supportive role in their communities. They display a strong social justice and human rights conscience. The Rwandese women experienced tragic consequences of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, but showed great resilience and were involved in the rebuilding of their country. They took on the challenge of accepting senior government or NGO positions both inside and, in one case outside Rwanda, often learning new skills on the way. The migrant women in Australia overcame the initial discrimination they faced as migrants and as educated women and stayed positive to their ideals achieving much success. All women showcased in this presentation are passionate community advocates and play a supportive role in their communities and display strength and resilience. The findings resonate with the vital and uncontested importance of education, the desire to be empowered, the capacity to be resilient and adaptive and the importance of giving back to the community. Our key recommendations are to continue

to provide women with avenues to feel empowered, to have opportunities to further their education, to offer adaptive structures and mechanisms that build resilience and to grow strong communities where both men and women are engaged in a constant dialogue for growth. We propose that through transnational alliances and collaboration, women can cross borders to generate change, transform, and bring about capacity building.

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