

Khadra Mohamed

I was born in Somalia and lived there for the first eight years of my life before the civil war erupted in early 1991. My family and I fled to Kenya before coming to New Zealand as a teenager. I didn't speak English when I arrived here in 1999 and school was not easy as I had spent my childhood years in refugee camps in Kenya and missed out on many years of schooling as we had to move from camp to camp. Coming to New Zealand was an opportunity to catch up with missed opportunities in education and other areas of life development. I had only one year of high school in New Zealand but later enrolled into tertiary programme after improving my English.

I have a Diploma in Computing and I am currently a second year student at the University of Waikato where I am doing my bachelor of Social Science (Public Policy). I am also planning to start the Graduate Diploma in Not-For-Profit Management later this year.

At the beginning of this year, I had the opportunity to undertake a university research project that looked at the problem of refugee employment participation in New Zealand. In the research, I defined the problem of refugee employment, outlined the causes of the problem and looked at policy solutions from the United States of America and Australia. Finally, I made recommendations to the problem. What started as a university paper became a paper that some local NGO managers within the refugee sector were interested in implementing some of the recommendations. To my knowledge at least two of the proposed recommendations are being considered for implementation within the Waikato area.

Currently I have a contract with English Language Partners New Zealand to work with them as a learner and learner community consultant. At the moment, my work with ELPNZ involves in consulting with stakeholders within the organisation and identifying ways in which the organisation can better partner with its learners and learner communities. I am also a member of their National Ethnic Advisory Group.

Before my current role, I worked in different roles and participated in a range of voluntary activities relating to refugee resettlement programmes. I worked at the Waikato Migrant Resource Centre where I had the opportunity to work with different resettlement agencies located in there. I am also the Women's Affairs Coordinator for the Waikato Somali Friendship Society and a member of Waikato Refugee Forum.

With my experiences of coming to New Zealand as a Refugee and overcoming the many years of missed educational opportunities as well as my involvement within the refugee resettlement agencies locally and

nationally, I believe that I can positively contribute to the effective governing of Refugee Services.