



## **Human Rights and Advocacy Training**

Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) in partnership with the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

### **PARTICIPANTS DRAFT BIOGRAPHIES<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Afghanistan**

##### **Nabila Moshref (F), Noor Australian Association**

Nabila has been in Australia for more than 36 years. She spent most of her time working with Afghan community, young or old. She has trained as Transcultural Mental Health's bilingual group leader and STARTTS' group facilitator. Nabila participated in the residential CiCT leadership course in 2021. Nabila is currently the Afghan Community Liaison Officer of the Noor Australian Association. She works with the community by introducing different programs to engage new members and ensure they are supported. Her work focuses on youth, women, and newly arrived individuals to Australia. She often runs programs in the community to create a safe, caring, and nurturing environment to best support people's resettlement journeys.

##### **Syed Shah Khan AMIN ZADA (M), Afghan Resource Centre**

Syed came to Australia in 2009 when he was only 16 years old with no word of English. He then worked really hard and became a role model student in his schools. To this day, he has often been invited by the Chester Hill Intensive English Centre and Chester Hill School to speak with students about his experience and how he overcame challenges. Recently, he graduated with a Bachelor of Policing. He joined the Australian Afghan Khorasan Association in 2011 as a volunteer to help others and gain work experience. Since then, his volunteering and support to his and other refugee communities has never stopped. In 2014, he became the Public Officer of the Australian Afghan Khorasan Association. And currently, he is the director of the Afghan Resource Centre. He participated in the residential CiCT leadership course in 2019.

##### **Ziba Gulzari (F), Kateb Hazara Association**

Ziba is currently a Board member of Kateb Hazara Association (KHA). KHA aims to equip humanitarian entrants and other vulnerable member of community from Hazara background with the knowledge and skills to identify, understand and take action to address their identified needs, integrate into Australian society, connect with other mainstream services. Ziba is a strong advocate for permanent pathway of Hazara asylum seekers, inclusive practice of including Hazara associations in decisions made by all levels of government, and

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<sup>1</sup> These biographies have been prepared by STARTTS based on information submitted by participants for this or past training and additional information available online. They are yet to be reviewed and approved by the participants and STARTTS apologises in advance in the case of any inaccuracy or misinterpretation.

reinstatement of SRSS payments for all unemployed asylum seekers. In her journey of advocacy, Ziba has experience in lobbying, writing letter to MPs, submitting petitions, and meeting representations. In joining this training, she hopes to gain professional understanding and proper process of effective advocacy.

## **Arabic-speaking communities**

### **Bashar Hanna (M) (OAM), Arts & Community Development**

Bashar is a social expert as well as an artist, who established the Arts & Community Development in Fairfield, back in 2014. He helps refugees to heal from their trauma through the beauty of music and performing arts. Bashar attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2019 & 2020. Bashar is interested in learning about new equity, inclusion, and capacity building strategies that are underpinned by academic theories. Bashar hopes to upskill themselves through constructive discussions with other community leaders and academia facilitators.

### **Nour Moustapha Ghazi (F), Auburn West Public School**

Nour is an Arabic teacher who volunteers at the Auburn West Public School to help teach Arabic to young people. Nour also volunteers to assist working parents with their children's assessment and language skills. Nour attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2021 and have done two social work placements with 4 Cs and STARTTS which served to assist refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants with meeting their needs and navigating life in Australia. Nour would like to expand her knowledge and skills on advocacy and upskill her knowledge on social work.

### **Dr Qais Al-Shakarchi (M), Iraqi Australian University Graduate Forum**

Dr Qais was one of the pioneer engineers and respectable educators in Iraq in the 1900s. He immigrated to Australia in 2010 and it was a new starting point in his training and education process. He has more than 40 years' experience in the university and Industrial environment, worked as a lecturer and Head Department, Assistant Dean at the Middle Technical University, and holds three postgraduate degrees. He is currently a teacher at the Australian Ministry of Health and a senior consultant engineer in the field of solar energy at National Solar COMP. He is also a facilitator and Bilingual Community Educator (BCE) with NSW Refugee Health Service, STARTTS, CORE & ACA. Dr Qais attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2019 & 2020.

### **Wasan Al-Obaidi (F), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)**

Wasan is a Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) facilitator at STARTTS. In her role, she delivers sessions on Australia services and navigation tools to help newly arrived members of her community ease into their resettlement journey. Wasan believes attending this training will aid her in presenting topics in the FICT program especially regarding human rights, strategic advocacy, and facing media pressure. Wasan attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2019 & 2020.

## Arakanese Community

### **Tun Tun Khine (M), AK- TV Australia**

Tun is an Editor at AK- TV Australia, a community media broadcasting channel. Tun cooperates and works together with Burmese leaders living in Sydney. He worked as a coordinator for the Commission for International Justice and Accountability (CIJA) that collects the sources of war crimes evidence against the Burmese military regime. Tun attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2021. He is looking forward to learning about ways he can assist the Burmese community with finding ways to raise their voices and speak up about the issues affecting them and their communities.

## Burmese Community

### **Mee Squee (F), NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)**

Mee is a Burmese Group Worker dedicating to support members of Burmese/Karen community in Sydney. Mee completed her Bachelor of Community Welfare in 2017 at Western Sydney University. Prior to that, Mee was working at Aged Care for 11 years, caring for elderly residents and providing them with the best quality care. Mee has always been very passionate about serving and helping others. Being a STARTTS worker Mee was able to provide support to many community members who are in need as a group or individually and Mee finds it very rewarding. Mee attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2021. By joining this course, she hopes to learn about advocacy from a practical standpoint to better serve her community.

### **Naw Hser Nay Say (F), Karen/Burmese Community**

Naw is an active member of Karen community in Sydney. She helps her community member with interpreting when asked and has been a dedicating volunteer teacher for Karen Language School since 2020. She hopes that there will be more opportunities for education and career pathways for Karen youth. She also would like to advocate for an easier process for Karen community members to receive governmental services and better service delivery to refugee community by settlement services.

## Chaldean Community

### **Basim Shamaon (M), Chaldean Community**

Basim Shamaon is a highly respected and valued community leader in Southwest Sydney and in his Chaldean community, who works with migrants and refugees is his life, passion and identity. He has recently written and published a book called *"From Iraq to Australia: Jewels from My Journey"*. Basim attended the CiCT non-residential leadership course in July 2022 and looks forward to learning about new and innovative ways to advocate for his community as well as building connections with other community leaders.

### **Maisoon Yalda (F), Urhi Chaldean Community Language School**

Maisoon has always been passionate about teaching and education. She is the principal of Urhi Chaldean Community language school for five years, a teacher for 11 years in Iraq, and a teacher aide in Sydney for more than 10 years. Besides her professional life, Maisoon is a

community leader in Chaldean community. She has a volunteer program that teaches members of her community English and prepare them for citizenship tests. She is also a Justice of Peace in NSW. She attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2021. Maisoon hopes to learn more about the international human rights system, the Australian political system as well as advocacy and lobby skills she can leverage to better serve her community and others.

## **Khmer Community**

### **Chanthy Lim-Chum (F), Khmer Community of NSW**

Chanthy arrived in New Zealand in 1982 as a refugee with her family, then moved to Australia in 1995. Her family has been actively involved in the community for a long time, and she has been recently elected as the President of the Khmer Community of NSW. Khmer Community was formed in late 70s when Cambodian Students were lobbying the awareness of Khmer refugees in various camps around the borders that needed Australia Government to help. Chanthy is a strong advocate for human rights, democratic and women's rights.

### **Chharvy Kim (F), Khmer Community of NSW**

Chharvy is an active community member and former Assistant Treasury of the Khmer Community of NSW. The association focuses on Buddhist healing practices, promotes harmony through connectivity and celebrations, and empowers the pursuit of mental well-being through education groups and guided meditation sessions. She attended the CiCT non-residential leadership course in July 2022. Through her participation in the training, she endeavours to expand her knowledge on both the international and national laws and regulations on refugee and migrant rights to better equip her to serve the most vulnerable members of her community. Chharvy recently joined STARTTS with a new role as the community development worker supporting Khmer community.

### **Srey Touch Kang (F), Khmer Community of NSW**

Srey is currently the Secretary of the Khmer Community of NSW, who is a former president of the organisation for two terms. She received COVID-19 Award and Communication Award for her contribution to community during the COVID-19 crisis period. Srey is a passionate human right advocate and respectable community leader. She has organising numerous events for her community. Professionally, Srey is a registered nursed since 2013.

## **Latin American**

### **Juan Aburto (M), Latin American Community**

Juan Aburto, a former political refugee from Chile, a survivor of torture and trauma, diagnosed with complex PTSD. Juan is currently working in the TAFE NSW SEN Domain quality assurance, design, and development. Prior to this role, Juan's substantive position is Teacher of Information Technology with over 22 years working for TAFE NSW. Juan's strong connection with the refugee community is enhance as STARTTS client and supporter, Juan's survival story is embedded in the Museo de La Memoria in Chile, contributing to event for the UN and World Health Organization to advocate for refugees, mental health, complex PTSD and journey to healing from torture and trauma, Juan advocate in his work organisation and the community for mental health and more inclusive work practices to understand people with PTSD and other mental illnesses. As a person with lived experience, Juan's motto "I

*graduated in the rigors. I will survive, I will resist, I will endure*". He participated in the CiCT residential leadership retreat in May 2022.

## **Mandean**

### **Anwaar Al Khamisi (F), Mandaean Nasoraean Association International**

Anwaar is the Community Engagement and Multicultural Stockholder Linking Officer at the Mandaean Nasoraean Association International. This organisation supports newly arrived refugees from the Mandaean community by linking them with services such as mental health support, housing assistance and emergency domestic violence services. She has extensive experience advocating for her clients on housing and social welfare. She attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2019 & 2020 and is working towards gaining certification in advocacy.

## **South American**

### **Patricia Gonzales Masías (F), Peruvian Community**

Patricia is a facilitator at Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) focusing on the Peruvian Community and Latin community at large. Her work focuses on promoting and organising events that centre on traditional beliefs and values and focus on teaching advocacy to individuals. Previously, she worked as a tenant advocate and housing officer for migrants and refugees. She participated in the CiCT residential leadership course in May 2022 and continues to use the skills she learnt in her work.

## **Tamil Community**

### **Dharmarajah Dharmakumar (Kumar) (M), Tamil Community**

Dharmarajah (also known as Kumar) is a community leader in the Tamil community. The Tamil community has a large number of refugees and asylum seekers whose visa status renders them ineligible to vital education, health and welfare services. Kumar is a strong advocate for NDIS eligibility, permanent visa pathways for asylum seekers and postgraduate study options for asylum seekers. He also actively engages in ongoing advocacy and support for mental health, wellbeing, and suicide prevention in Tamil migrant community. Kumar attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2021 as a participant and later aided with facilitation at the CiCT leadership course in July 2022.

### **Iyngaranathan Selvaratnam (Iyngaran) (M), Tamil Resettlement and Community Konnect**

Iyngaran is currently the president of Tamil Resettlement and Community Konnect. The organisation was established in 2019 and has since initiated different programs such as the Tamil Companion Program, Food Relief Program & COVID-19 Education Sessions during the pandemic for Tamil refugee households and the Tamil Community Members Mental Health Awareness Night. Iyngaran is also a strong advocate for permanent protection visas for all Tamil asylum seekers, recognition of the Tamil Genocide & prosecution of perpetrators, recognition of the rights of Tamils for self-determination and calling for an end to the Australian government's cooperation with the Sri Lankan government and armed forces, many of whom stand credibly accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He has also worked with different organisations including '*We Are Better than This*', protesting at the

former immigration minister's office, working on advocating for the Home to Bilo campaign and working on protest rallies and forums with the Tamil Refugee Council.

#### **Kalyani Inpakumar (F), Tamil Refugee Council**

Kalyani is currently the NSW Coordinator of the Tamil Refugee Council. She is a strong advocate for refugees and bringing awareness to the ongoing genocide against the Tamils in Sri Lanka. In her advocacy journey, she has met and continued to meet with MPs, community leaders and other stake holders. Through this training, she hopes to get in-depth understanding of the systematic advocacy work and build skills in developing relationship with the media. Kalyani attended the CiCT non-residential leadership training in July 2022.

#### **Renuga Inpakumar (F), Tamil Refugee Council**

Renuga is currently the spokesperson for the Tamil Refugee Council (TRC). Since 2011, TRC has been working to draw awareness on the need to provide permanent protection for refugees. They work with various organizations and other refugees to amplify the voice. Being the spokesperson for TRC, Renuga has held and spoken at rallies, met with ministers alongside refugees. She has also had the opportunity to speak at the United Nations and worked with other oppressed groups.

#### **Sulojana Nadarajah (F), Tamil Community**

Sulojana (also known as Sulo) is a Tamil community leader. She wears many hats and has assisted her community in different ways including helping them with forms, employment process, interpreting, advising, and making referrals to organisations. Sulo was a STARTTS facilitator. Currently, she keeps the role of a Tamil Resettlement and Community Konnect (TRACK) companion Coordinator and Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group (BMRSNG) member of community visitor. She recently completed the NSW multicultural scholarship program for interpretation. She participated in the CiCT residential leadership course in May 2022 and is looking forward to learning more on advocacy skills that can help serve her community better.

#### **Viji Dhayanathan (F), Pink Sari Inc.**

Viji is a Secretary of Pink Sari. She is a Tamil community volunteer. Previously she worked at Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association advocating for CALD people with disabilities and their families. She attended the CiCT residential leadership course in 2019 & 2020. Viji is interested in learning about mental health advocacy and how to remove the stigma around it. She is also interested in learning more about the lobbying process, particularly in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. She is a passionate Women's Right advocate and assist victims of domestic violence.

### **Uyghur Community**

#### **Mehmet Celepci (M), Australian Uyghur Association**

Mehmet is a Board Director and the official spokesperson at the Australian Uyghur Association, an organization representing the Uyghur people in NSW. It was established to provide support for Uyghurs living in NSW, preserve language and cultural traditions of Uyghurs, promote an understanding of Uyghur cultural traditions within the Australian wider community, assist Uyghurs in NSW in adapting to the Australian culture and way of life, maintain a close working relationship with other Uyghur organization in Australia and overseas, and support the struggle of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples for human rights and

justice in East Turkistan. He attended the CiCT non-residential leadership course in July 2022. Mehmet would like to learn about advocacy strategies to raise awareness on China's genocidal policies against the Uyghurs and the closure of the concentration camps in Xinjiang in China.

### **Gulmire Zunun (F), Uyghur Women Group**

Gulmire is a Board Director of Australian Uyghur Association, and the current group leader of the Uyghur Women Group in Sydney. The group was established in March 2018 with the support of STARTTS to increase participants' resilience and cultivate bonding social capital amongst women from Uyghur background. The group meets on a weekly basis and participate different activities together such as religious and language class, sewing workshops, swimming lessons and many more. Gulmire attended the CiCT non-residential leadership course in July 2022. She has used the training learnt from previous workshops to support her group and organise events in her community.

## **Vietnamese Community**

### **Loan Nittel (F), TAFE NSW & Together Everyone Achieves More for Refugee Inc (TEAM4R)**

Loan is currently a teacher for Community Services, Counselling and Disability at TAFE, and a volunteer with TEAM4R. In her role at TAFE, she sees many students from CALD background (especially new migrants) who are consistently disadvantaged by the Australian education system and structures for learning. She would like to learn more about how she can better support this cohort in accessing education and getting their overseas skills recognized. She believes the learning resources and assessments processes the Australian education system is currently offering do not meet the needs of this cohort, which makes it very challenging for all parties (students, employers, and teachers/assessors). In addition, Loan has been supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to access education and training and employment. Loan participated in the CiCT residential course in May 2021.