



BVOR NEWS

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

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Sponsorship changes lives



Atosha and Karina enjoying the snow

Many sponsors find refugee sponsorship a life-changing experience, but Karina Reid found it also changed her career path. Her Vancouver-area Group of Five sponsored Atosha Ngage, who arrived with her five-year-old son in February 2019. Karina quickly found herself in “the most life-changing experience since having children.” The former sales director has since returned to school focusing on women’s studies and social justice. “There are 71 million displaced people in the world. How can I not do something about that? I want to be involved in policy change.”

For Karina, the recognition that something had to change started with Atosha’s reaction to turning on a bathtub tap. “She was so excited when she was was telling her father about it on the phone,” says Karina. Atosha, who had spent the last five years in a Namibian refugee camp, was used to having to get water from a water pump outdoors. “I turn on the tap in my house and don’t think about it,” says Karina. Sponsorship has been “eye-opening about what we take for granted.”

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program

The BVOR Program helps resettle refugees identified by United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as the most vulnerable in need of resettlement. It is called blended because it is a cost sharing arrangement. Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides up to six months of income support for the newcomers, while private sponsors provide another six months of financial support, start-up costs and up to one year of social and emotional support.

Atosha had fled the Congo with her brother, father and her then-infant son, spurred by fear of the ongoing war and conflict in her country. They left her mother, a sister and a brother behind. Her father and brother are still in the Namibian camp.

When she and her son arrived in Canada, they spoke Swahili to each other, and Atosha could also speak the French she had learned in school. Within two months, Atosha had found work at Culture Kefir Company, which tries to hire newcomers, single mothers and women. “She took great pride in her first paycheck. It’s important to her to give back,” says Karina.

Atosha’s workplace English is reinforced by formal English lessons. Her son goes to French-language school so that mother and son will also have that language in common. Atosha gave birth to a second child in October, and the sponsorship group supported her through that process. She has also found a church community, and Swahili-speaking friends.

(continued...)

Along with the joys of sponsoring a newcomer have come challenges, which the group has successfully met through frequent discussions. “I now have a really special bond with the five women in the group,” says Karina. “It’s like an extended family. We have learned a lot, although it’s not always easy.”

They plan to sponsor a BVOR refugee again. “More people should do this,” says Karina. “Anyone displaced is our problem. It’s my problem and I need to do something about it. We are one global community.”

There are many Congolese refugees like Atosha who have found asylum in different parts of Africa. Here is a sample profile of another Congolese BVOR refugee, and some of the reasons she needs to be sponsored.

This 41-year-old mother from the Democratic Republic of Congo, currently living in Uganda, is accompanied by her four children. She has six years of education and has worked in sales and as a housekeeper. Life is difficult for her and children in Uganda.

Difficulty finding work

Urban refugees must compete with other residents for employment opportunities and to earn an income.

BLENDED VISA OFFICE-REFERRED (BVOR) PROGRAM

For more information, visit www.rstp.ca or email bvor@rstp.ca

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program

 **CCS**
Catholic Crosscultural Services

 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Difficulty affording education

Refugees have the right to education and can register in Ugandan schools, but most of them cannot afford the cost of uniforms and books.

Limited health care

Chronic or complex medical conditions are difficult to manage.

No possibility of return

The ongoing conflict in eastern DRC prevents refugees from returning home with safety and dignity.

How can you help?

Contact the Refugee Sponsorship Training program and ask us about the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVOR).

RSTP will match you with a suitable refugee or refugee family and help you through the application process!

For more information, please visit:

[RSTP's video on Congolese BVOR refugees](#)

[RSTP's 4-step video on BVOR sponsorship](#)

[RSTP's webpage on BVOR sponsorship](#)

Interested in sponsoring a BVOR refugee?



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Phone us at 416.290.1700 x2403