



## CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

# Making Speedy Family Reunification a Priority

## Manifesto for Family Reunification

Barriers to family reunification are causing tremendous hardship for thousands of people, with huge costs for Canadian society as a whole. In response, the CCR developed a Manifesto for Family Reunification. The Manifesto has been signed by more than 70 organizations.

Through the Manifesto, the CCR and the endorsing organizations call on the government:

- to promote an immigration and refugee system that respects basic rights by favouring the speedy reunification of families in the interests of the healthy, humane, respectful and productive integration of newcomers;
- for the processing of family members of refugees, especially separated children, to be done in Canada.

## Impact on Children

Prolonged family separation has its most dramatic impacts on the many children affected. As a society we have particular obligations to protect children, including by respecting their right to be with their family.

### Separated Children of Refugees

Yet children of refugees in Canada often wait years to be allowed to travel to Canada, especially if they are in Africa or Asia. Even in cases where children are separated from both their parents, and by definition at risk, processing can take years.

Canadian visa post

Abidjan<sup>1</sup>

Nairobi<sup>2</sup>

Islamabad

Colombo

One in 5 cases of refugee families take more than:

32 months

28 months

39 months

37 months

1. Covering West and Central Africa
2. Covering East Africa

### Separated children still waiting three years after application

*T. arrived in Canada in May 2002, fleeing persecution in Democratic Republic of Congo. She was forced to leave behind her two children, aged 2 and 7 years. In June 2004, T. was accepted as a refugee and applied for permanent residence.*

*More than **three years later**, T. is still waiting for her children to join her. The children's files have been transferred by Citizenship and Immigration Canada from Abidjan to Nairobi, perhaps contributing to the delay. Her parents, aged 81 and 76 years and in poor health, are no longer able to manage looking after the children, now aged 8 and 13 years.*

**Solution** Allow family members of refugees, especially separated children, to travel immediately to Canada so that processing can be done in Canada.

Wish you were here!



# Making Speedy Family Reunification a Priority

## Impact on Children

### Excluded Family Members

Following a change to the regulations adopted in 2002, a person is not a family member for immigration purposes if the family member was not examined by an immigration officer when the sponsor immigrated to Canada. This provision was intended to deter or penalize deliberate misrepresentation, but there are other provisions in the law that can be used to deal with misrepresentation. And the CCR is aware of numerous cases where there was no fraudulent intent and yet people, including many children, are facing **perpetual separation** from their families.

**Solution** Repeal the excluded family member rule (*Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations 117(9)(d)*).

*N. became pregnant while being processed for resettlement in Canada as a refugee. She tried to contact a Canadian visa officer to explain the situation, but she was not able to speak to anyone except a male interpreter, who told her to resolve any issues after arrival in Canada. Because of the stigma surrounding pregnancy outside of wedlock, she did not dare disclose the details to the interpreter. She gave birth before she left for Canada.*

*After arrival in Canada, N. tried to sponsor her child, appealing to the officials to make an exception in her case on humanitarian grounds. This is the solution proposed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for such cases. The application was refused in July 2007. N. is desperate to be reunited with her baby left behind. Her older child in Canada is suffering from neglect because his mother is so distracted.*

*Wish you  
were here!*

