

## MEDIA RELEASE

**Minister for Community Services**  
**Minister for Women**  
**The Hon. Linda Burney MP**



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Wednesday, 28 October 2009

### **AFRICAN WOMEN GRADUATE TO EMPOWER OTHER WOMEN**

Twenty-two inspiring African women, some who have survived war and persecution, today graduated from a training program that has given them the skills to speak out for other migrant and refugee women.

Minister for Women Linda Burney presented them with certificates for completing the African Women's Advocacy Unit Training Program at a special graduation ceremony at Parliament House. **(Photos are available)**

The training program, auspiced by the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women (ANCORW), is designed to equip refugee women with the skills they need to lobby and advocate for women in their community.

"These women have overcome adversity and today graduated from training that has given them the skills to represent migrant and refugee women," Ms Burney said.

"These graduates living mostly in Cabramatta, Liverpool and the Illawarra originally came from countries including Zimbabwe, Sudan, Burundi, Congo, Kenya and Sierra Leone.

"It was a pleasure and privilege for me to present these strong, inspiring women with their graduation certificates."

Ms Burney said that since the African Women's Advocacy Unit Training Program was developed in 2005, it has successfully helped African women settle into and learn about life in Australia, as well as developing the ability of these women to find their own voice and be leaders in their communities.

Twenty-five-year old Irene, who is graduating today, said the program has helped her understand her community's situation.

"The program was really good for me. It showed me where I am and what I have to do in the future – for my people and my community," Irene said.

"I am now interested to work with the advocacy association. I also recently did some leadership training that taught me how to help African families coming to Australia.

"When they arrive, they don't speak English but it is good they have someone who can help and speaks their language."

Irene was a refugee from war-torn Congo; escaping with her mother, sister and brother. At the time, her father was in prison at an unknown location. She was reunited with her father in America in 2002 before marrying her Australian husband and moving here.

She currently lives in Liverpool with her husband and three-year-old daughter.

“We have the opportunity to help women in our home countries who are still suffering. They don’t have a voice but we do,” Nava Malula, Project Worker from ANCORW said.

AWAU was set up to lobby, advocate, train, network and support refugee women and their families so that they can rebuild their lives and represent themselves in Australia.

The program is funded by the federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

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