

# Refugee Voices - Flora's Story

This is Flora's story of being a refugee in Australia, told in her own authentic voice.

This resource was developed in conjunction with [www.refugeevoices.org.au](http://www.refugeevoices.org.au).



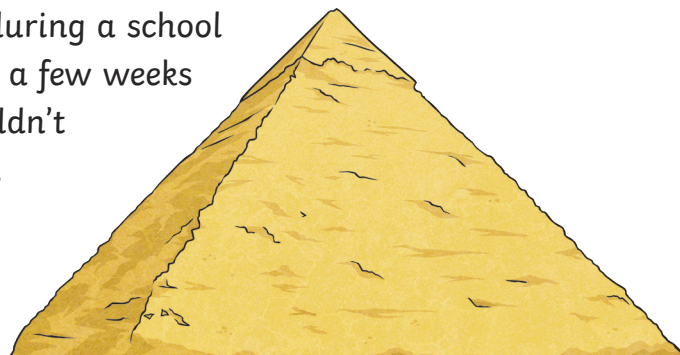
My name is Flora.

My family and I arrived in Australia in May 2004. I was born and raised in Sudan. When I was 11 years old my father died of kidney failure. From that point on, my mother found herself raising four children on her own. She took courage and decided to migrate, knowing that challenges would come with it. However, the chance of making it to the other side, where her children will have a better life, outweighed the fear of the unknown.

As a family, we prepared to embark on this new journey, one that soon tested the strength of the ties between us, but also built our resilience through the challenges that we overcame together.

Our journey began in Egypt. A few weeks after we arrived, we registered with the United Nations, seeking refuge. After four years of uncertainty, the United Nations finally granted us a visa to enter Australia. We were overjoyed by the news, yet completely oblivious of what awaited us on the other side of the world.

On the plane we quickly realised that communication was going to be one of the major challenges, since none of us spoke English. We arrived during a school holiday, so at least we had a few weeks to get over the jetlag. I couldn't wait to finally start school. I had missed out on four years of schooling while living in Egypt.



Life was very difficult in Egypt. Mum had young children (my younger brother and sister), so my older sister and I had to work to support the family. Thankfully it was no longer the case in Australia. But the thought of going back to school after all those missed years terrified me.

The day finally came and we got ready to go to school. My heart was beating fast as I entered the gate of the school. I sat in the corner and observed the teacher and the students, since I could not understand a word that was said. Everyone spoke so super fast that it felt like I was in a movie, except this movie had no subtitles. When I got home that day, I had mixed feelings. A part of me felt disheartened, but the other part felt grateful that I now have an opportunity to get an education. Thankfully, the positive emotion outweighed the negative one, and it became my main motivation throughout my life to this point.

Six months later, I could have basic conversations. Shortly after that I learned that it was time for me to leave language school and move to the mainstream school. Many refugees were arriving during my time at the language school and they didn't have capacity to keep students for more than six months. I went on to study Year 10 at a mainstream school. It felt like I was starting all over again. I had butterflies for weeks and, when the day finally came, I was trembling with fear, to the point that I got sick on the first day and was sent home after a few hours. When I came back the second day, I could barely understand anything. The school I attended didn't have many students that were of refugee background, so I felt out of place. Although I thought language school was difficult enough, this was a whole new level, utterly more difficult.

I felt isolated and lonely for a while. School was no longer joyful. I was struggling as I knew that I had a lot to catch up on while learning the language. I had so much homework and no help at home as my mother could not read or write. If anything, most of the time I had to help my siblings with their homework and help mum with reading letters, and filling in forms. The thoughts of quitting school crossed my mind a countless number of times, but each time I convinced myself out of it. I remembered what my mother sacrificed to give me this chance and this gave me strength to keep going. One step after another.



To the readers, I hope that my story will inspire you to take the time when you come across someone with an experience like mine. Take the time to listen to their story. Get the full picture before making any judgement. Ask yourself: "What if I was in their shoes?"

