

Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT), Canada

Ms. Rez Gardi

Organisation Profile

Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT) is an international advocacy initiative working to enhance the effectiveness of global refugee responses, by co-designing mechanisms to amplify refugee leadership ecosystems and increase the participation of refugees at state levels in a meaningful, sustainable, and transformative way. R-SEAT is a non-profit organization led by refugees, working to empower refugees and to build participatory mechanisms for refugees around the world. Our organizational objectives focus on creating institutionalized forms of participatory mechanisms entrenched within state governments to create change in international policy settings. Coupling this, we have a vested interest in strengthening the advocacy potential of refugee leaders and refugee-led organizations through parallel initiatives like our training programs. These two elements converge within our work wherein we support refugee leadership ecosystems within states, and these ecosystems then support our work in building out participatory mechanisms for refugee leaders. This method is backed by robust academic research, takes a collective approach to influence policy, and ensures that refugee policies become more principled and effective by including the voices of refugees on issues which affect their lives.

Nominee Information

Ms. Rez Gardi



Gender: Female

Job title: Co-Managing Director

With many years of experience in the field of global refugee leadership, rooting my knowledge in lived experience as well as legal and humanitarian expertise, I will bring a grounded and human focused approach to my tenure on the ICVA Board. As Co-Managing Director of R-SEAT, we have successfully scaled our work across over 10 countries of varying positionalities to the global system, and have furthered the emerging norm of meaningful refugee participation internationally. Including a direct line of communication to numerous refugee-led organizations is central to R-SEAT's mandate and would better connect the work of ICVA's member organizations to those on the ground.

Regarding ICVA's 2030 Strategy, R-SEAT is already working in policy spaces of forced migration, including working on the coordination of stakeholders and predictable financing. To coordinate between state powers, international organizations, and refugees themselves, R-SEAT's primary programming is focused on creating state specific participatory mechanisms for refugees. To custom build each of these mechanisms to the conditions of a specific state, R-SEAT undergoes extensive work to consult with the refugee leadership ecosystem of a given state. In doing so, we often become aware of funding needs that different RLOs are burdened with. The skills it takes to navigate these complex situations without becoming engrossed in the

political conditions on the ground are crucial to this work. As a third party, we offer practical solutions to perennial issues by creating tailor made solutions which local refugee leaders tangibly influence.

R-SEAT is unique to this space in how it heavily bases its own work within an academic framework. In connecting with academia both when strategizing on our target countries, and in said countries to locally root our work, R-SEAT is comfortable in analysing and learning from robust data, as well as collaborating with these types of actors. We are specifically interested in exploring how ICVA members may further benefit from these types of connections. Utilizing each of these skills allows for a balanced approach which centres neutral data in deciding on new agenda items, which is another skill I would bring to the ICVA Board under my tenure. Connecting stakeholders across levels, effectively collaborating to meet the needs of disparate parties, and making tangible solutions possible are within my realm of expertise.

Please indicate whether, if elected as a member of the Board, you would be willing to stand for election for

- **Chair –No**