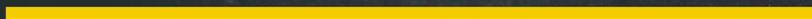


ANNUAL REPORT

2021



ASYLUMWORKS



A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Several years ago, one of AsylumWorks' very first clients gave me a growth chart like the kind a parent would use to measure their child's height over time. She had carried it with her from Ethiopia and she was gifting it to me now as a good luck charm. "What you are doing is important," she told me. "I hope you can grow this organization big because there are so many people who need your help." I promised her I would do my best.

As I reflect on 2021, I am reminded of this client's wish for the future. **Five years ago, AsylumWorks didn't exist. Today, our organization has served nearly 1,500 individuals and families from over 50 different countries.** To further expand the reach of our mission, AsylumWorks launched a training program at the start of the year. In just ten months time, we provided online training and coaching to 1,841 direct service providers from 53 organizations to help them serve immigrants seeking safety from violence with greater knowledge and skill.

Our growth never fails to amaze me, but it also serves as a reminder of how many people still need our help. Newly arrived Afghan allies, unaccompanied children from Central America, new moms, single dads, university students unable to return home because their country is in crisis: our waitlist is full of good people in bad situations. But thanks to your generosity and compassion, these brave individuals and families will also have a second chance at a new beginning. To the clients who inspire us, the supporters who encourage us, and the donors who fund us, thank you for making our work possible.

And thank you for helping me keep my promise.

Sincerely,



Joan Hodges-Wu, MA, LGSW
Founder & Executive Director



A Broken Asylum System



Asylum seekers and other immigrants seeking safety from violence often arrive in the U.S. with many needs but few resources. These **individuals and families must navigate a long and complex legal process** to obtain a form of humanitarian-based legal relief so they can lawfully remain in the U.S.

Unlike the U.S. criminal justice system, **immigration law assumes guilt over innocence**. Migrants are responsible for retaining their own attorneys, and they must provide evidence to prove why they cannot return to their country of origin.

At the same time, asylum seekers are **ineligible for mainstream support services** and are simultaneously **denied permission to work** for several years. Many immigrants experience extreme poverty, profound isolation, and continued victimization as a result of their decision to seek safety in the U.S. For these individuals and families, **immigration legal services are essential but rarely sufficient**.

AsylumWorks was created to bridge this gap.



Our Solution

AsylumWorks is a regional 501(c)3 nonprofit established to empower asylum seekers and other immigrants fleeing violence to rebuild their lives with dignity and purpose. **Our interdisciplinary, wraparound, trauma-informed approach combines free case management, legal navigation, employment assistance, and community support groups** to serve individuals and families living in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Northern Virginia. Because collaboration is central to AsylumWorks' ethos as an organization, we partner with immigration attorneys and other skilled professionals to create a complete continuum of care for our clients and their families.

The results of our approach speak for themselves: **AsylumWorks** clients are dramatically more likely to attend immigration proceedings, and significantly more likely to secure a permanent form of legal protection that offers a pathway to U.S. citizenship. To further scale our impact, AsylumWorks creates expert tools, training, and technical assistance we share with other immigrant-serving organizations nationwide.



“AsylumWorks taught me how to open doors for myself and not just stand and wait for doors to be opened.”

— P., Asylum Seeker from Venezuela

OUR IMPACT IN 2021

AsylumWorks served **407 people** (including **141 children**) from **48 countries**

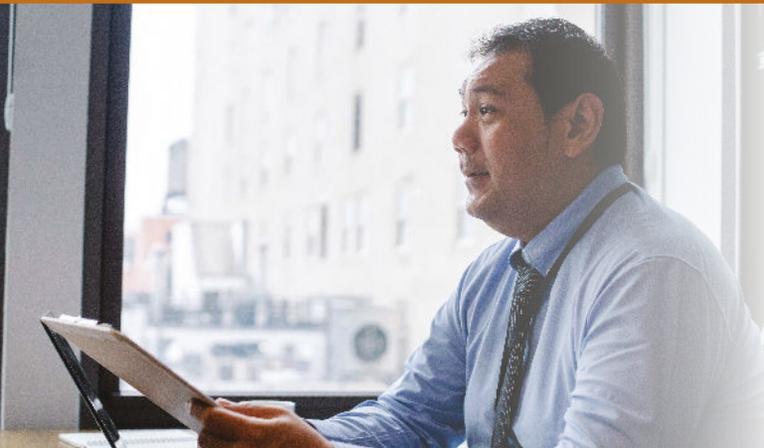
After six months of AsylumWorks services and support...

96% of clients report increased or sufficient community involvement.

92% of clients report good or improved mental health

91% of clients report increased or sufficient access to healthcare

Raised and distributed over \$50,000 to offset the cost of immigration legal fees and provide emergency cash assistance to clients



Hosted 4 Job Readiness Training Workshops and piloted our new *Path Forward* curriculum in English, Spanish, and Amharic.

"You saw my potential when this country made me forget. I just want to be associated with AsylumWorks forever." — T., Asylum Seeker from Indonesia

Launched 2 community groups: **PRISM for members of the LGBTQ community** and family-friendly **Social Saturdays** open to all clients and volunteers.

NURU'S STORY



Nuru hadn't realized the grocery store line was moving again until the woman standing behind her tapped Nuru on the shoulder. "Hello, the line is moving. Can you move? Um, hello? Ma'am? Are you OK?"

Nuru fled East Africa to seek asylum in the United States after surviving a lifetime of abuse. Nuru knew she was safe in the U.S., but she lived in a constant state of anxiety. Every day, Nuru woke up fearful that something bad would happen to her husband or teenage children back home. If she let her mind wander, Nuru's thoughts would race, and she would lose track of time and place. Nuru's purpose in life had always been her family. Now, she didn't know if she would ever see them again. Nuru was not OK.

Nuru learned about AsylumWorks from a friend at church. Shortly after she became a client, Nuru's community support worker (CSW) connected Nuru to a high-quality, low cost immigration law firm. **AsylumWorks paid a portion of her legal fees so she could begin working with her new attorney immediately.** However, despite their best efforts, the asylum office failed to provide a timely decision. This delay forced Nuru to wait an additional two years for an outcome that is generally provided within a few weeks.

After several failed communication attempts, Nuru's attorney successfully sued the asylum office, compelling them to release the asylum officer's decision. When Nuru's attorney called to relay the decision, Nuru thought she might faint. And then she heard two life-changing words: Asylum granted!

Throughout this multi-year legal battle, Nuru's CSW at AsylumWorks served as a trusted confidant. She provided weekly check-ins, encouragement, and held space for Nuru to express her hopes and fears without judgment. Her CSW shared culturally appropriate coping skills to manage the ongoing uncertainty. Nuru also benefited from AsylumWorks' network of skilled medical and mental health professionals who provided additional support.

Today, Nuru is participating in AsylumWorks' employment program where she is learning valuable skills that will help her find and keep a job to support her family as they prepare to join her in the U.S. For the first time in a very long time, Nuru has hope for a better future.

*Client's name has been changed to protect her privacy.

FINANCIALS

AsylumWorks' budget grew by **53%** in the past year. **In 2022**, we are on track to serve an even greater number of people, expand the breadth and depth of services, and build new partnerships to amplify our work.

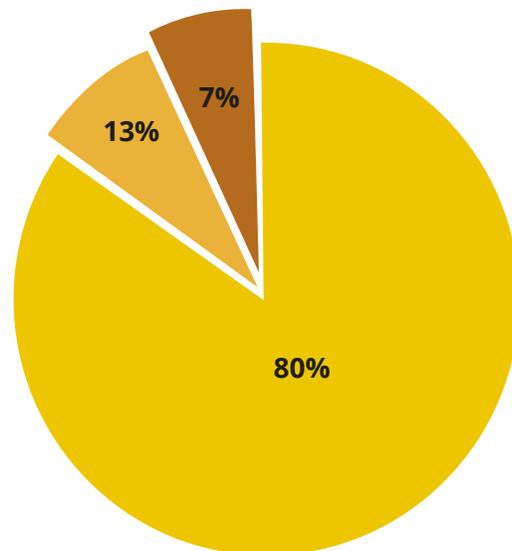
INCOME

\$1,034,139.67



EXPENSES

\$864,715.84



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NEW DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT



Sally Miller, Board Member

Sally has over 30 years of experience in advocating on behalf of the banking and financial services industry before Congress, federal and state regulators, and foreign supervisors. Until April 2018, Sally was the CEO of the Institute of International Bankers (IIB), a New York and Washington, D.C.-based trade association representing international banks conducting business in the U.S. She received her law degree from American University's Washington College of Law and her bachelor's degree from Boston University.



Liana Monteciños, Board Member

Liana is an asylee from Honduras, an immigration attorney, and a passionate activist. She became an attorney in response to her own grueling experience with the U.S. immigration system that forced her to battle removal proceedings from a young age. Liana is the Managing Attorney at Monteciños Immigration Law LLC and the Founder and Executive Director of United for Social Justice, a nonprofit organization that helps first-generation and undocumented students access higher education. She is a native Spanish speaker.



Denise Hunter, Board Member

Denise Hunter has dedicated her attorney career to nonprofit direct services work supporting low-income immigrants, the LGBTQI community, and individuals living with HIV. She currently leads the immigration practice at Whitman-Walker Health as Senior Immigration Staff Attorney, with an expertise in asylum claims based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV. She received her law degree in 2011 from The George Washington University Law School and is fluent in Spanish.

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Montgomery County Council
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Tracey and Dean D'Angelo
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Anonymous
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DC Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
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DC Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs
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United Mission for Relief & Development
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*A list of donors who gave less than \$500 can be provided upon request.



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