



REFUGEE WORK RIGHTS WHY IT MATTERS

An estimated two-thirds of the world's 16 million refugees remain in protracted refugee situations, with no hope of safe return in the near future. Despite this disturbing reality, refugees often remain marginalized within Africa, Asia and Latin America, confined within camps, denied access to lawful work or education opportunities, and without equal access to their fundamental rights.

The right to work is essential for a durable solution to long-term refugee displacement. It enables autonomy, freedom of choice, freedom of movement and the ability to provide for one's family themselves with dignity. For the host country, research has shown that self-sufficient refugees provide economic and social contributions to their communities, expand markets, import new skills and build global networks.

Although refugee work rights are clearly protected by the 1951 Refugee Convention, signed by 144 countries around the world, these are often inaccessible in practice.

Case Study: Ecuador

Refugee work rights have been included in the Ecuadorian constitution since 2008. Refugees need only show proof of legal status to obtain a work permit and access safe and lawful employment opportunities. With equal access to rule of law protections in the workplace, a refugee can feed her family and seek justice for labor rights violations. With our help, a refugee woman went to court and won \$3,000 in owed wages and compensation.

Case Study: Tanzania

While refugees are not allowed to work, a 'peasant permit' designed for cross-border agricultural workers was extended to a group of refugees in 2011. With the support of livelihoods skills trainings, refugees like Suzanne can access work beyond the informal economy and build a new life.

Refugee Work Rights Campaign

Led by Asylum Access, the Refugee Work Rights campaign is part of our global policy advocacy efforts to raise awareness, change perspectives, improve policies and engage a variety of actors in support of safe and lawful employment for refugees. With a blog and a growing work rights coalition, the campaign will engage development aid actors, private sector employers, government authorities and the UN refugee agency. Contact Anna Wirth at anna.wirth@asylumaccess.org to join the movement today.

Asylum Access is an international nonprofit founded to make refugee rights a reality in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We help refugees assert their fundamental rights to safe and lawful employment, housing and education.



Suzanne's Story

When she approached our office in Dar es Salaam, Suzanne was a single mother without refugee status and protection. She risked detention as an 'illegal migrant' just to travel to our office for help. Asylum Access helped her understand her options and obtain a peasant permit, an alternative means to secure legal status. Suzanne then began attending our livelihood workshops, which have helped her run her own restaurant, feed her family and look forward to a future as a successful business-woman.