

# ASYLUM ACCESS ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2011 - 2012



## Asylum Access: Empowering Refugee Communities Worldwide





# ASYLUM ACCESS: EMPOWERING REFUGEE COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE

Imagine fleeing after your home is attacked or your family threatened, arriving alone somewhere in Africa, Asia, or Latin America with little more than the clothes on your back. Could you go into court and argue in a foreign language, under foreign law, that you should be allowed to remain in the country? Fifty percent of refugees are children – could you have done this when you were fifteen?

Refugees are frequently unaware of their rights, and lack the tools to assert them. Less than one percent arrive in the global north. The vast majority remain in first countries of refuge in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where their rights are routinely violated. Many must fight even for the most fundamental right: the right to safety, to protection against forcible return to torture, rape or murder.

Once refugees have secured their safety, they must then put food on the table – but most countries do not allow refugees to work. Their children should go to school – but some are turned away at the schoolhouse door, and others face xenophobia, harassment, or bullying. They must be strong for their families, but they have no support to help them heal.

These are daily challenges for most refugees. The primary approach to refugee assistance, however, has been emergency aid. Food, blankets and tents meet refugees' immediate needs today, but provide no lasting solution for the ongoing barriers refugees face as they strive to rebuild their lives.



Asylum Access's advocacy helped give refugees in Ecuador, like this woman, a constitutional right to safe, lawful employment.

Photo by Michelle Arevelo-Carpenter

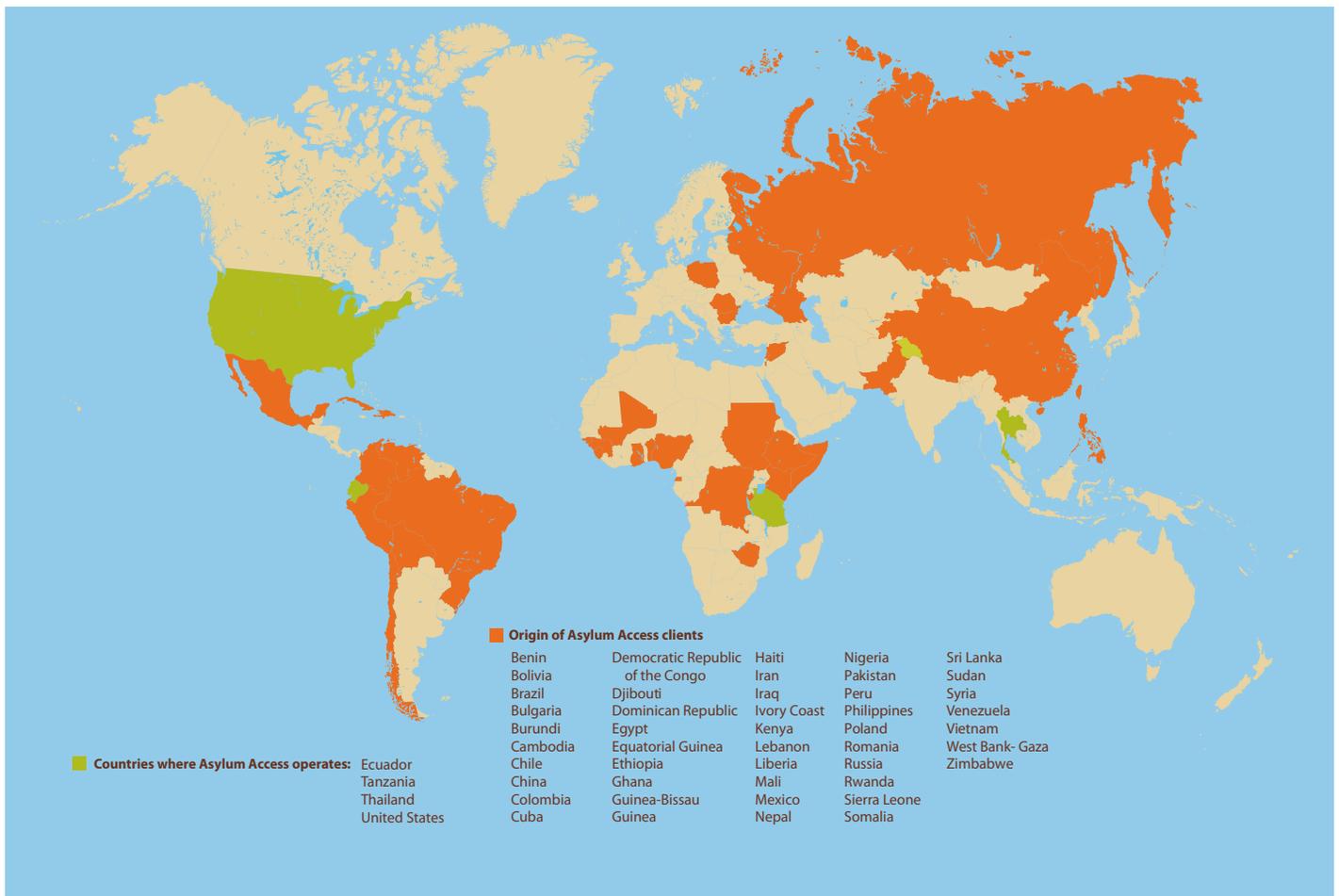
***Asylum Access was founded to change this.***

# ABOUT ASYLUM ACCESS

**Asylum Access was founded to make refugee rights a reality.**

We give refugees the tools to assert their rights, so they can provide for their families and rebuild their lives. Our innovative, sustainable approach makes legal advocates – locals, refugees, and other foreigners – available on the ground in Africa, Asia and Latin America to help refugees secure legal status, obtain work permits, enroll in school, access banks, and much more. We also advocate for broad changes in national, regional, and global laws and policies so refugees can enjoy their fundamental human rights in any country of refuge.

Asylum Access’s revolutionary model for refugee empowerment uses five integrated tools: individualized legal counsel and representation, community legal empowerment, policy advocacy, strategic litigation, and movement-building. Together, these tools enable us to transform the human rights landscape for refugees, making human rights a daily reality in refugees’ lives. Asylum Access works in Ecuador, Thailand, and Tanzania; we also share our model with others who will replicate it in their own countries. To date, we have directly impacted the ability of **over 1,000,000** refugees to live safely, work, send children to school and rebuild their lives.



# PROGRAM OUTCOMES & ACTIVITIES

This year marked the fifth full year of operations for Asylum Access. We continue to help increased numbers of refugees assert their rights each year, and to achieve policy changes that benefit hundreds of thousands. This year, for the first time in our history, we provided direct legal assistance to a landmark 5,000 and more refugees asserting their rights to safety, employment, protection from sexual violence, and access to education and healthcare across Ecuador, Thailand and Tanzania.



Individualized  
Legal Aid



Community Legal  
Empowerment



Policy Advocacy



Strategic Litigation



Global  
Movement-Building

## 1. Individualized Legal Aid

Asylum Access offices in Ecuador, Tanzania and Thailand continue to provide grassroots legal assistance to refugees, enabling them to assert their rights. This year, our legal advocates handled 2,363 cases, reaching 5,802 refugees with legal information, advice and representation. Our cases included asylum and other legal status claims, protection from workplace exploitation and abuse, access to education and healthcare, protection from sexual violence and equality before the law.



### Ecuador

This year was a landmark year: We provided legal assistance to 2,900 refugees in 1,543 families. This is the largest number of refugees to receive legal aid in a single country in a single year through all of Asylum Access's history. Our efforts helped refugees obtain temporary and permanent legal status, enroll children in school, and seek employment.

Our Ecuador team continues to explore alternatives to facilitate refugees' access to legal status. For example, we introduced a new service that enables refugees in border regions to apply for legal status without making the difficult and expensive journey to a provincial capital to petition in person. When we debuted this service at a four-day legal aid clinic in February 2012, 567 refugees sought our help. Our delivery of the 567 applications for legal status to the Ecuadorian government marked the first time the government has formally accepted submissions made by a legal representative in lieu of the refugee applicant.

## Thailand

In 2012, our team in Thailand provided legal information, advice and representation to 1,981 refugees in 363 families. Among other clients, Asylum Access Thailand successfully won refugee status for a lesbian couple, securing consideration of their cases jointly as a family unit. Six months after their asylum interview, the couple received refugee status and access to resettlement processes that allowed them to relocate to another country where they can rebuild their lives together. In addition to representing individual clients, Asylum Access Thailand also submits regular recommendations for improving the asylum process to the office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bangkok and at UNHCR's headquarters in Geneva.

## Tanzania

Despite a Tanzanian law requiring that all refugees be interned in camps, our team in Tanzania helped over 100 refugees secure special permits allowing them to live and work in Dar Es Salaam. Because of the law mandating internment, many urban refugees remain fearful of identifying themselves, which complicates the provision of legal assistance. To ameliorate this challenge, we piloted our first mobile legal aid clinic in Tanzania, bringing legal information, advice and representation directly to refugee communities. Overall, we provided legal assistance to 921 refugees in 457 families this year.

## 2. Community Legal Empowerment

Asylum Access empowers refugee communities through “Know Your Rights” workshops; training refugees to serve as professional legal interpreters, which enables others in their community to access justice; training refugees as Community Legal Advocates, able to provide basic legal advice, accompaniment, and referrals to other refugees; and facilitating community organizing to address trends in refugee human rights violations. This year, we expanded our community legal empowerment activities to include specialized services for women and girls in Tanzania.



## Ecuador

Our team in Ecuador reached out to refugee communities across the country, traveling throughout Ecuador to provide Know Your Rights trainings. During our travels, we also built networks and partnerships with local grassroots and refugee-led organizations to ensure the continued dissemination of information about refugee rights after our staff departed. These partnerships led to the identification of hundreds of underserved refugees on the northern border with Colombia, who are now receiving legal assistance from Asylum Access.

## Thailand

In late 2011, our team in Thailand produced two 30-hour trainings on professional legal interpretation for 39 refugees and others providing interpretation services to the refugee community. Following these trainings, we developed an interpreters' resource center that allows refugee interpreters to improve their skills, while ensuring that refugees can access legal assistance in their native language.

Also new this year, we facilitated community organizing and self-advocacy among interested refugee communities in Thailand, beginning with the Congolese community. In addition to these expanded services, we also continued to offer community legal education workshops to support new arrivals seeking to understand their rights and options in Thailand.

## Tanzania

In Tanzania, we launched our first Women's Empowerment Group, designed to bring refugee women and girls together in a supportive setting to identify and address shared challenges. This Women's Empowerment Group is currently exploring their legal rights and practical options related to microfinance, employment, and other socio-economic strategies. We also began pairing our mobile legal aid clinics with Know Your Rights trainings that bring legal information to refugees where they live.

## 3. Policy Advocacy

This year, Asylum Access played a key role in supporting promising developments in refugee rights. Building on the relationships we have developed with the Ecuadorian, Thai, and Tanzanian governments, we advocated and advised on improvements in refugee policy, seeing particular progress in Thailand and Tanzania. We also advocated for improvements in refugee rights implementation by the UN refugee agency – a process that is ongoing – and increased promotion of refugee rights by the US as a donor government.



## Ecuador

Asylum Access Ecuador has emerged as a leader among Latin American refugee legal aid organizations. This year, we began a multi-year initiative to evaluate refugee status determination (RSD) – a blanket term for asylum and other legal protections against refoulement, or forcible return – procedures throughout Latin America, in collaboration with other groups across the region. This groundbreaking project is designed to improve access to fair, transparent asylum procedures for refugees across Mexico, Central and South America.

In early June 2012, Ecuador passed a new law that makes obtaining refugee status more difficult: Refugees fleeing general violence rather than specific persecution are no longer considered refugees. Asylum Access Ecuador is coordinating civil society responses to these changes, including a constitutional challenge and other steps to ensure that all refugees have access to legal status.

## Thailand

Asylum Access Thailand made large strides in advocacy in 2012. We are currently one of only two civil society organizations appointed to a government-led working group charged with amending Thailand's Immigration Act. As a result of our advocacy, the working group agreed that all its proposed amendments to Thai law this year will concern the issue of legal status for refugees. The first proposal, released for public feedback as of June 2012, includes provisions that will protect asylum seekers from arrest and deportation while they await a UN decision on their application for refugee status – a huge step forward for Thailand, where asylum seekers are currently subject to arrest and indefinite imprisonment while their claims are determined.

Asylum Access Thailand continues to push for the right to counsel in UN-run refugee status determination proceedings. Our team in Thailand is also advocating for the adjudication of refugee status for refugees in detention, which would protect them against *refoulement* (forcible return) and indefinite imprisonment.

## Tanzania

Asylum Access Tanzania's 2012 policy successes mark tangible steps forward for refugee rights in the country. In May, our 2010 report "No Place Called Home," which documents the presence and needs of refugees in Dar es Salaam, was directly referenced in the State Department's 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights. This is the first time a major human rights monitor has acknowledged Tanzania's urban refugee population and their corresponding rights, paving the way for effective government and NGO responses to this underserved population. The reference comes as a result of a paired advocacy strategy between Asylum Access Tanzania and the Global Policy department and reinforces the strength of our local-global advocacy model.

Asylum Access was also invited to submit recommendations to aid Tanzania's development of an urban refugee policy. We provided an in-depth report analyzing the implementation of urban refugee policies around the world to assist the government as it looks towards a sustainable long-term solution for refugees. This signals a major policy change that, when implemented, would allow refugees in Tanzania to live lawfully in local communities across the country. Today, refugees in Tanzania must reside in closed internment camps unless they can obtain a rarely-granted permit to live elsewhere.

Shortly after we submitted our recommendations, the Tanzanian government announced its plans to develop a policy to legalize urban refugees and provide access to basic rights and essential services.

As the government of Tanzania is currently not accepting new asylum applications, leaving newly-arriving refugees without protection, Asylum Access Tanzania is encouraging the UN to provide further international legal protections for refugees while continuing to challenge this government policy.



## 4. Strategic Litigation

Because strategic litigation is sometimes perceived as highly confrontational, we deploy it selectively, often only after policy advocacy options have been exhausted. In 2011-2012, Asylum Access engaged in strategic litigation only in Ecuador.



### Ecuador

Asylum Access Ecuador filed several landmark litigation cases, focusing on two areas: sexual and gender-based violence, and due process in Ecuador's asylum system. We are currently advancing a challenge to a new law that requires refugees to seek permission even to access the asylum process, which keeps some refugees from petitioning for protection. A complaint alleging that this policy is unconstitutional will be formally filed in the Constitutional Court next year. We also filed three cases with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights concerning access to justice for refugee survivors of gender-based violence.

### Thailand and Tanzania

Asylum Access Thailand and Asylum Access Tanzania are exploring possibilities for strategic litigation, but do not currently have cases pending.



## 5. Global Policy Advocacy and Movement-Building

This year, Asylum Access put legal assistance for refugees on the UN refugee agency's policy agenda at an unprecedented level. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) Annual Consultations with NGOs discussed legal services and strategic litigation in three separate official sessions in front of a global audience. Behind the scenes, we organized a day-long workshop between NGOs and UNHCR to improve improve the UN's refugee status determination (RSD) procedures, which decide the fate of nearly 100,000 refugees each year. Our goal is to ensure that UNHCR's amended procedures, to be released next year, accord with international due process standards. Our recommendations were well-received by UNHCR and we continue to be involved in the amendment process.



Asylum Access also chaired the Annual General Meeting of the Southern Refugee Legal Aid Network (SRLAN), where refugee rights advocates from around the world gathered to plan joint initiatives for the coming year. Working groups resolved to take action on the right to work, cessation of refugee status, and improvements in both government and UNHCR RSD. Finally, members discussed legal ethics, the Nairobi Code, and how to mutually support the provision of high quality legal services across the network.

Our outreach to the US State Department in September 2011 and March 2012 resulted in direct references in the 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights (released in late May), and contributed to our successful application to the US State Department for a major grant to our Ecuador office. This grant marks a shift in the State Department's approach to refugee assistance, as it signals increased support for refugee legal aid and other models that empower refugees to assert their fundamental rights.

Asylum Access also played a leading role in the growth and development of the global refugee rights movement. Our biggest contribution to the movement is our Refugee Rights Toolkit, an "office in a box" designed to enable refugee rights advocates to replicate our model anywhere in the world. The Toolkit was released to selected pilot users in early 2012. This "soft launch" included presentations to several refugee



assistance NGOs in Johannesburg, South Africa, and around 30 refugee rights advocates at Asylum Access's Refugee Rights Leadership Training in Geneva, Switzerland. Feedback from pilot users will be used to develop a final version of the Toolkit for public release by 2015.

In addition, Asylum Access this year began cultivating our past staff and volunteers to build a robust alumni community. These efforts facilitate alumni's ongoing engagement with refugee rights issues, building a community of leaders who understand and promote refugee rights throughout their careers.

An Asylum Access legal advocate helps a refugee apply for legal status in San Lorenzo, Ecuador. Photo by Michelle Arevelo-Carpenter

# FUTURE PLANS

Asylum Access ultimately intends to make refugee human rights a daily reality for refugees in Africa, Asia and Latin America, so that refugees everywhere have the tools to rebuild their lives themselves. In Ecuador, Thailand and Tanzania, we are working to reach even more refugees by exploring new ways to bring our legal aid services directly to refugee communities.

Globally, we are in the planning stages to launch three new offices by 2015. This year, we have been working closely with Clifford Chance, who have generously donated their time and expertise to conduct research on locations that would most benefit from our work.

To further scale our work, we also continue to develop the Refugee Rights Toolkit to help refugee rights advocates customize the Asylum Access model to local contexts and launch their refugee legal aid project anywhere in the world. (See above, Tool 5: Global Policy Advocacy and Movement-Building.)

Together, these efforts will catalyze the growth of the emerging global refugee rights movement. By proving that respect for refugee rights can not only coexist with, but also increase prosperity and growth for, their host countries, Asylum Access will lay the groundwork for global advancements to make human rights a daily reality for increasing numbers refugees – nationally, regionally and worldwide.

# EMPOWERING REFUGEES TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

Asylum Access helped thousands of refugees in Ecuador, Tanzania and Thailand to seek asylum and assert other rights. Many of our clients are still in such danger that we cannot show their faces or even publish the details of their claims. Below, however, are a few clients who have agreed to let us tell their stories. Names and other identifying details have been changed to protect client security.

## *Lin*

Lin, a devout Falun Gong practitioner, was persecuted by the Chinese government because she refused to give up her beliefs. She was imprisoned for many years in brain-washing camps, prisons and forced labor camps. As a result, her health deteriorated over the years, and she was frequently malnourished to the point of being close to death.

Lin's work, family, and relationships were also impacted. She lost her job, her family members' employment was threatened, and her marriage suffered. But despite her trials, Lin's faith remained strong.

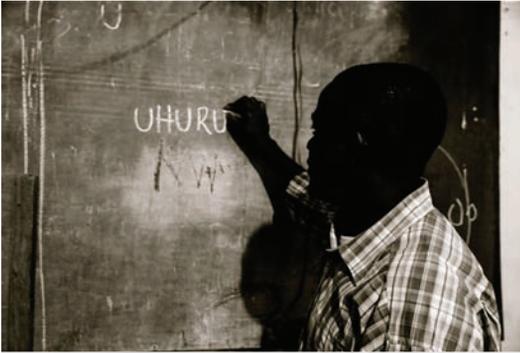
She eventually decided to flee China for a new life in a country where she could practice her beliefs freely. But she soon encountered another setback. The Thailand office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) closed her application for refugee status before she had even presented her case.

That's when Lin came to Asylum Access Thailand for help. Working closely with an Asylum Access legal advocate for several weeks, Lin prepared an extensive affidavit that documented her years of torture and abuse at the hands of the Chinese government. Lin's legal advocate argued persuasively and successfully for UNHCR to re-open her case, a discretionary and rarely-granted privilege. When she eventually received refugee status, Lin visited our office in Bangkok to show off her new Refugee Certificate – which frees her from the fear of forcible return to China – and to thank Asylum Access for making her new life possible.



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## Kevin



Refugee in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.  
Photo by Gemma Caldwell.

Kevin was just 22 years old when he left home in 2009 with his brother. Rebel groups living near his village often came to collect food and forcibly recruit youth. Years of violence and instability had made his home in Sud Kivu a fearful and uncertain place to live. So when the rebels and the Mai mai met in his village again one day, Kevin decided it was time to leave.

Kevin and his brother ran away as gunshots rang out nearby. First on foot and then by boat, they traveled to Tanzania. Once there, they sought in vain for relatives who had become separated from them during years of civil war.

They soon found themselves in the hands of immigration authorities, who began investigating their case. Following a hearing before

the UN refugee agency, they finally received news that they would not be assisted – they were deemed not to be in need of international protection.

“We didn’t really understand the reason for doing that. We doubted that the UNHCR did that. We understood that UNHCR takes care of refugees, but the way we were treated raised a lot of questions and we didn’t understand why we were determined as not refugees. Up to now we don’t understand why they would do that,” Kevin said in an interview with Asylum Access.

Life in the refugee camp was difficult. Kevin and his brother were given very little food and lived separately from other refugees, because of what seemed like an arbitrary exception. They attended church, where they met a pastor who helped them with food and found them odd jobs to eke out a living. He also directed them to Asylum Access, where Kevin’s brother attended our Know Your Rights Training and learned about their rights.

Today, Asylum Access is advocating with the UN refugee agency and the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs to reverse the decision on the refugee status of the brothers.

## Hina

A mother and a wife, 45-year-old Hina led a peaceful life in Pakistan as an Ahmadi until her husband converted to a fundamentalist sect of Islam and ordered her to renounce her faith. When she refused, he turned aggressive. Following a divorce, he moved out but often returned to harass her. He beat both Hina and her daughter, threatened to kill her and even kidnapped their child. Her attempts to seek police protection were ignored; the persecution of Ahmadis is condoned by government authorities, who consider Ahmadis members of a heretic sect. Based on the advice of the Ahmadi community, she moved to a different part of the country but encountered more trouble when local authorities accused her of preaching heresy and issued a warrant for her arrest.

Desperate, Hina fled the country with her daughter in 2009. Life was difficult as a refugee on the run. She did not speak the local language, lacked legal status and struggled to make ends meet as a single mother. The Ahmadi community in Thailand, most of them refugees, was a vital pillar of emotional support. But Hina still lacked the means to rebuild her life. In May 2010, Hina approached Asylum Access for help. Our legal advocates successfully helped her apply for refugee status and she received a UNHCR Refugee Certificate in August 2011, which provides a measure of security and hopes of access to lawful employment and education for her daughter. With our help, Hina and her daughter can lead a peaceful life and practice their religion free from fear.



San Lorenzo, Ecuador. Photo by Nitsan Bar Tal



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST YEAR

Our staff work directly with refugees in Ecuador, Thailand and Tanzania, helping them find safety, seek employment, and access education, healthcare and financial institutions so they can rebuild their lives. Here's a recap of some key stories from the past year, previously published in our Quarterly Newsletters.

## Reaching Wrongly- Detained Refugees

PUBLISHED AUGUST 2011

By Asylum Access Ecuador VLA and Loyola Law  
School Public Interest Fellow Jenna Gilbert

In September 2010, VLA Ashley Connell and I nervously waited as prison guards searched us before letting us into the Centro de Rehabilitación Social de Varones de Quito #2, one of Quito's three men's prisons. We had no idea what to expect once inside. Prior to this visit, Ashley and I corresponded with the Director of the men's prison and obtained permission to organize an upcoming Know Your Rights workshop to inform refugees and asylum seekers of their rights and how to assert them.

After speaking with the Director and several inmates who were in charge of the prison's common area, we arranged to return the following week to present our very first workshop, in English and Spanish so as to reach the broadest audience possible. It was much larger than anticipated and approximately 80 inmates crowded into the room. Some were eager

to hear our presentation and learn about their rights, others just bored and curious to see what these two “gringas” could possibly have to say. Asylum Access Ecuador has since expanded its work into all three of the men’s prisons, reaching approximately 230 inmates in our workshops. Of these participants, we have provided direct client services to approximately 90 people.

Since that first Know Your Rights workshop, the project has grown exponentially. At times it has been extremely difficult to manage the case load in the prisons, as well as manage the inmates during our weekly visits, since so many people are in need of services. Most of the prison directors have surprisingly offered us a warm welcome to work in the prisons, but some of the prison directors have also changed, which means beginning the process and forming relationships with the new directors all over again. Unfortunately, the Ecuadorian government has recently decided, as a matter of policy, to blanket deny every refugee applicant with a criminal history in Ecuador, as well as revoke the visas of all previously recognized refugees, in violation of the 1951 Convention. This recent change has forced Asylum Access Ecuador to reevaluate the program and consult with UNHCR to address this unlawful policy change.

Despite these challenges, the prison project has been extremely rewarding on a personal level. Many of our clients are already recognized refugees, others are in the process of applying for refugee status and others are applying for the very first time. Some of their stories are heartbreaking, and

they are so appreciative to see us every week, even if just to see a familiar face.

Our greatest success story comes from a West African client who approached me after our very first presentation. John was convicted of using a false passport and arrested at the airport in Quito. He told the police that he fled his country because he suffered serious political persecution, explaining that he had been arrested and tortured by the government and his family had been massacred. While he should have been interviewed by the Refugee Office at that moment, or referred to UNHCR, instead John remained in pre-trial detention and was eventually convicted and sentenced to one year in prison. He approached me 8 months into his sentence. As a result of our intervention, John was

granted refugee status soon after. Weeks later, we also won a Habeas Corpus action in which we argued that his detention was illegal because the 1951 Refugee Convention and Ecuadorian Constitutional law forbid the State from imposing criminal sanctions on refugee applicants who enter the country illegally (for instance, with a false passport) or remain there without documentation. Asylum Access Ecuador is still pursuing reparations for John in the Constitutional Court. We have also recently discovered two other inmates who had been detained for the same reason.

After nearly a year of weekly prison visits, there is still much work to be done. But through the work of Asylum Access Ecuador, dozens of refugees have gained access to the Refugee Office and now have the opportunity to assert their rights.



A legal advocate advises a client in San Lorenzo, Ecuador. Photo by Nitsan Bar Tal

# Interpreters: Partners for Refugee Rights

PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2012

By Asylum Access Thailand

Volunteer Advisor Soo M. Cheng

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***“All things are subject to interpretation; whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth.”***

***- Friedrich Nietzsche***

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Philosopher Nietzsche could well have been thinking of refugees and asylum seekers undergoing the refugee determination process (RSD).

Displaced from their countries and forced to build a new life from scratch, asylum seekers are constantly struggling for understanding from government authorities and non-governmental agencies who decide whether to grant them legal status, the key to all other rights. They not only must overcome their trauma, but also must overcome the challenges of navigating the legal system in an unfamiliar environment.

Language differences are the first obvious barrier. With responsible and professional interpretation, however, these can be overcome. As Thailand's refugees come from a wide range of countries and speak 20 different languages, there is a particularly strong need for support

from interpreters.

To develop a group of professional interpreters, Asylum Access invited Alice Johnson, Director of the Cairo Community Interpreter Project (CCIP), Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University of Cairo, to offer professional refugee interpreter training in Thailand. In September 2011, she delivered two well-received 30-hour training workshops to 39 interpreters who work with refugees from a range of countries including Somalia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China and Cambodia.

## **Upholding Professional Standards**

While sound linguistic skills are essential to the work of an interpreter, the ability to uphold professional standards of practice and ethical codes of conduct are critical to effective interpretation. This ensures that asylum seekers receive a fair hearing and help effectively convey

to the applicants the questions, explanations and decisions made by officials.

Under Alice's dynamic and interactive mentorship, the participants learned about professional benchmarks for community interpreting and the qualities that are essential for a good interpreter, among other skills. Through these workshops, Alice and her team are committed to developing interpreters who are knowledgeable, neutral, and committed to professional ethics like honoring confidentiality.

## **A Challenging Role**

The refugee interpretation setting may present unforeseen challenges for the interpreter. For example: The Decisionmaker turns to the Interpreter and asks: "Do you think she (Client) is telling the truth?" When the Decisionmaker does not appear to know the limits of the Interpreter's role, it is the duty of the Interpreter to educate the Decisionmaker, by saying, "The Interpreter is not allowed to offer a personal opinion."

The Client is very emotional and scared as she has been traumatized. When the Interpreter speaks loudly, or shows strong facial expressions, the Client withdraws and appears sullen and uncooperative. In this scenario, the Interpreter's body language has become a hindrance; a low profile and quiet demeanor not drawing attention to himself would be more appropriate.

As an asylum-seeker is in an exceptionally vulnerable situation, it is crucial for the interpreter to be

alert to all physical, emotional or semantic nuances of the situation. This includes being mindful of seemingly mundane details like seating arrangements, when to use the first or third person pronoun, and what to do in an awkward situation.

The training participants — refugee interpreters from Asylum Access Thailand, Jesuit Refugee Services and Bangkok Refugee Center — were thrilled to learn from the workshops and are looking forward to engaging with their hiring agencies and clients in a more informed and confident manner.

One interpreter reflected that the training really drove home the importance of her work, for the quality of interpretation can influence the RSD process and the type of assistance that the decisionmaker offers refugees. As such, interpreters are vital partners in the protection of refugee rights.

Following the positive feedback from this training, Asylum Access looks forward to creating further opportunities for refugee interpreters to improve their skills in the future. By developing higher standards for refugee community interpreting, we are enabling greater mutual understanding between refugees, government authorities and UNHCR officials, helping refugees better navigate the processes to assert their rights.

# Urban Refugees in Tanzania

PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 2011

By Overseas Operations Director Michelle Arévalo-Carpenter and Asylum Access Tanzania Director Janemary Ruhundwa

After Tanzania's 1998 Refugees Act made it an offence to live outside camps without a permit, urban refugees in Tanzania became an exceptionally vulnerable population, unable to assert their rights and seek protection from injustice.

Some of these refugees previously lived in camps and left for a variety of reasons. Within camps, known as "designated areas" in Tanzania, living conditions are difficult. Refugees have no means to earn a livelihood and are unable to send their children to school. But as permits to live outside camps are rarely granted, refugees fleeing violence and persecution in camps live a fearful existence on the fringes of society, vulnerable to exploitation, unlawful deportation and further injustice.

Despite a government moratorium on new refugees, the population of urban refugees has continued to grow, in part because recent arrivals have no option of registering in a camp. In addition, government authorities have applied sustained pressure on encamped refugees to leave the country since 2008, when government authorities declared

Tanzania's policy of becoming a "refugee-free country".

With the sole exception of approximately 160,000 Burundian refugees who have received naturalized residency, refugees are perceived as unwanted immigrants and the government is generally unsympathetic to their plight. Authorities have also started shutting down refugee camps, leaving refugees with nowhere to seek refuge and little hope of obtaining legal status.

Forced to eke out a precarious existence away from public scrutiny, refugees outside camps often find themselves drawn to cities and townships such as Kigoma, Mwanza and Dar es Salaam, lured by the promise of better livelihood prospects. Despite being entitled to international and domestic protection, they have no practical means by which to access that protection and are treated as undocumented immigrants. No official estimation of the number of refugees living outside camps exists and little is known about their coping strategies or protection needs.

To gain greater insight on the

daily challenges faced by urban refugees, Asylum Access conducted a survey of 122 urban refugees in Dar es Salaam. The results will be published in a forth-coming report, "No Place Called Home", which unveils a stark reality for this population.

For example, only 3% of those surveyed have a permit to live outside refugee camps. The remaining participants live in constant fear of deportation back to countries where they face persecution. This protection gap means that refugees have little choice but to conceal their identities and nationalities for a better chance at a reasonable livelihood. The circumstances for their children are no better, with

14% of participants choosing to keep their children at home to avoid discrimination or harassment.

In this context, how can refugees in Tanzania be better protected? The answer lies within current Tanzanian law. The Refugees Act already provides a statutory basis to recognize refugees with legal status through an adjudication process. Even with its existing faults, the law provides for a protection framework to ensure refugees have access to some rights but this is not implemented in practice.

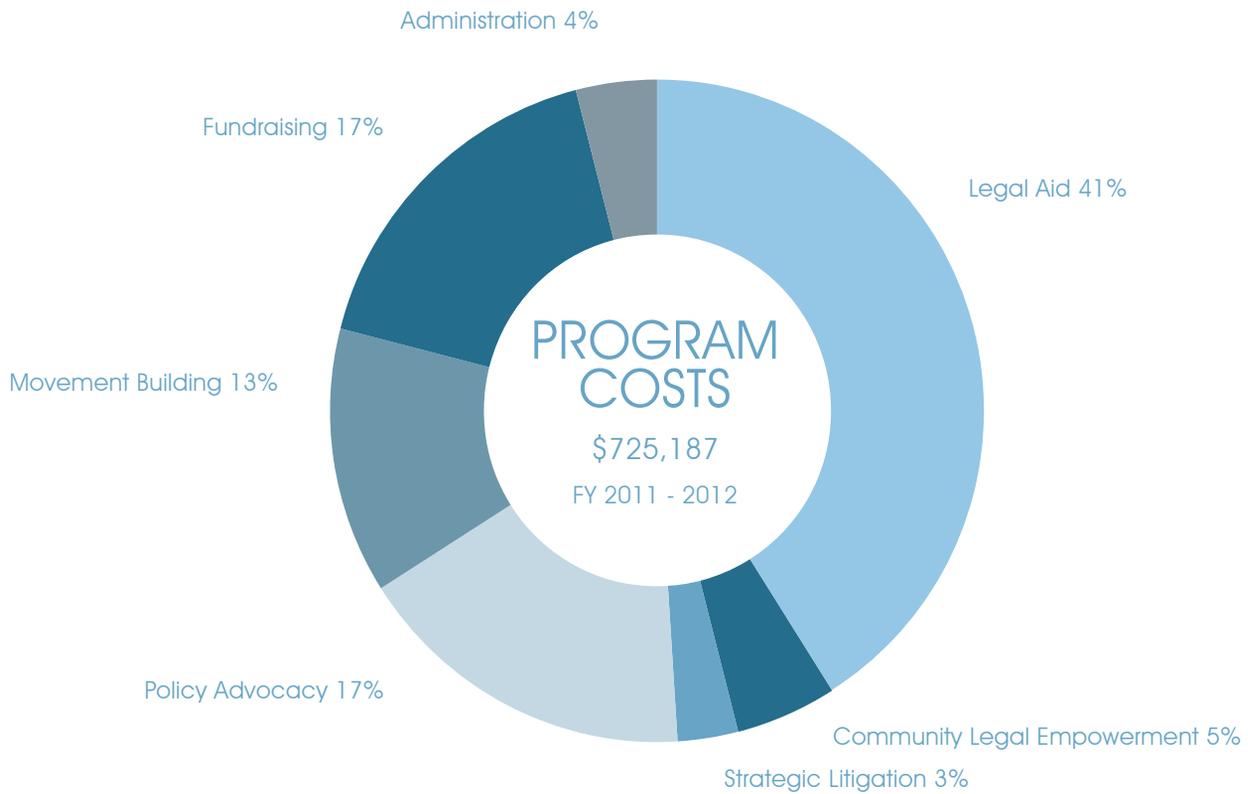
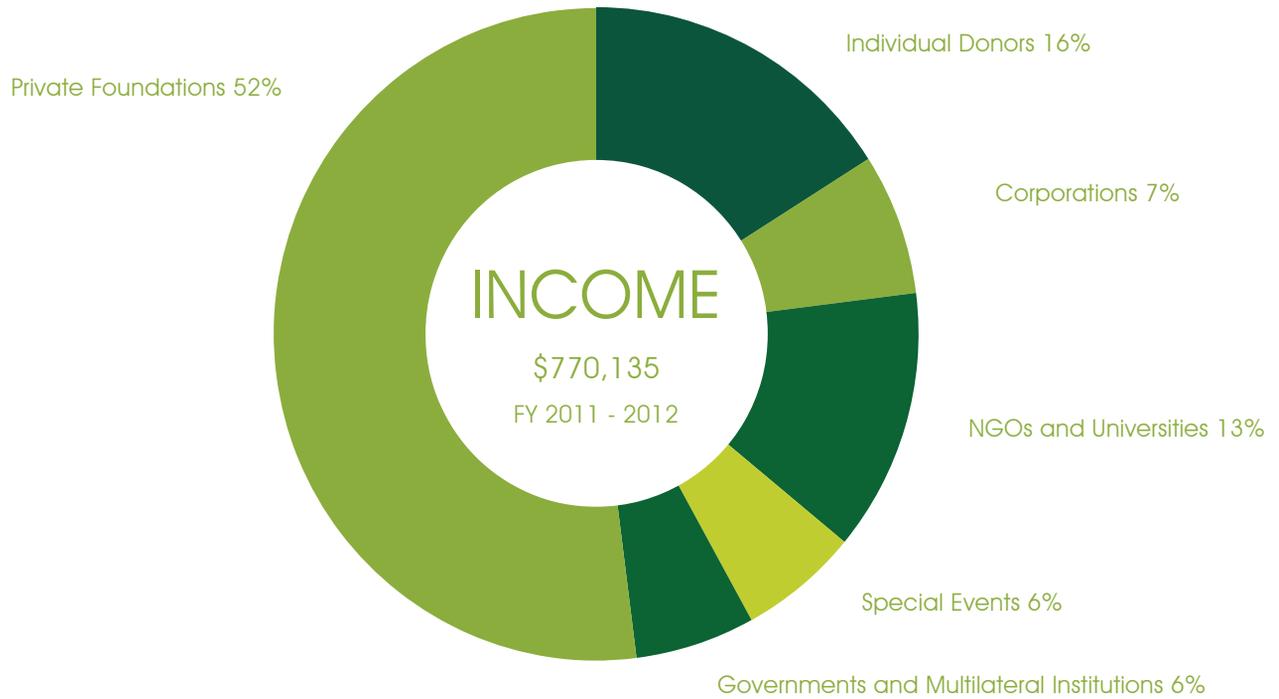
Indeed, Tanzania has already made internationally recognized progress in its rule of law in recent years. Implementing its existing

national refugee legislation would bring Tanzania back to the forefront of refugee protection in the region and continue making its laws responsive to the people living within its jurisdiction. Asylum Access strongly believes that it is critical to include this neglected population in the national agenda. We are currently advocating with government authorities for improved protection measures.



A refugee in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Photo by Gemma Caldwell

# FINANCIALS



### Summary of Income and Expense, Fiscal Year 2011 - 2012

#### Income

Contributed Support	
Individual Contributions	126,400
Corporate Contributions	42,475
NGO or University	103,037
Government and Multilateral	33,425
Foundation, Trust, Religious	402,477
Total Contributed Support	707,814
Investments	
Interest-Savings, Short-term CD	246
Special Events Income	
In-Kind Donations	12,841
Special Events Income - Other	49,657
Total Special Events Income	62,498

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<b>Total Income</b>	<b>770,558</b>
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#### Expenses

Special Event Expenses	32,475
Salaries and Related Expenses	502,472
Contract Services	46,297
Facilities and Equipment	8,235
Occupancy Expenses	42,610
Operations	28,656
Insurance, Membership Dues, Staff Development	11,479
Travel and Meetings	36,986
Business Expenses	4,939
Bank Fees and Currency Conversion	17,266

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<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>731,414</b>
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Net Ordinary Income	39,143
Other Income	0
Other Expense	
Grant Capital Purchase - Equip	483
Net Other Income	-483

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<b>Net Income</b>	<b>38,660</b>
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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thanks to our donors and volunteers

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