

Innovative Human Rights NGO Seeks Volunteer Legal Advocates (VLAs)

About Asylum Access

Asylum Access is a leading refugee human rights organization headquartered in Oakland, CA with substantial operations in three countries plus partnerships in additional countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Asylum Access is the only global organization working to make human rights a reality for refugees in first countries of refuge. Asylum Access believes that by empowering refugees to assert their human rights, we can create effective, lasting solutions for refugees around the world. When refugees can rebuild their lives, communities thrive.

Founded in 2014, Asylum Access Malaysia (AAM) is a locally registered NGO and a part of the Asylum Access family of organizations. AAM provides individualized legal services and community legal empowerment programming to refugees in Kuala Lumpur, ensuring that they are able to access their rights and working to expand protections for all refugees. Through all their work, AAM engages in advocacy, promoting system change in the environment to ensure that all refugees in Malaysia are able to live safely, move freely, work fairly and rebuild their lives.

Position Description

Asylum Access Malaysia (AAM) is actively seeking applications from individuals passionate about social justice and refugee rights, and who are driven to make a positive impact in the lives of refugees living in Malaysia. VLAs will **commit to a minimum of six months** and will be based in Kuala Lumpur. They will be directly supervised by the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Supervisor, and will work alongside other refugee advocates. Following an intensive training program in international refugee law and domestic laws and policies on refugees, VLAs will play a key role in executing AAM's advocacy tools, namely:

- (1) *Legal aid*: VLAs will provide legal counsel and advice to refugees before the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Malaysia. They may also assist in the representation of clients during RSD proceedings in the UNHCR.
 - (2) *Community Outreach*: VLAs will also be given the opportunity to participate in community legal empowerment initiatives, as well as participate in other outreach activities.
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AAM fosters a collaborative team environment to which all VLAs will contribute. VLAs will also help support the full management of the office, which includes participating in direct office administration essential to the successful running of AAM operations. VLAs may also be expected to facilitate community activities, present information about Asylum Access and refugee rights at community events, and assist in organizing conferences and meetings.

Position Responsibilities

- Advising refugees on the RSD process and assisting them to understand their rights;
- Conducting client intake and screening interviews, assessing needs, identifying vulnerabilities and referring cases to the relevant service providers as necessary;
- Preparing written briefs on behalf of those undergoing individual RSD procedures before the UNHCR;
- Maintaining a potentially high caseload of RSD cases in a fast-paced and demanding environment, while adhering to strict filing deadlines;
- Communicating updates to clients on a timely basis;
- Conducting research on Country of Origin Information (COI) and refugee law jurisprudence;
- Developing materials for workshops and legal clinics, and working with translators to adapt said materials;
- Conducting and participating in workshops and legal clinics;
- Assisting in developing and executing client outreach strategy in collaboration with the AAM team;
- Where necessary, assisting in the general administrative duties of the AAM office.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Ability to commit to at least 6 months of full-time service work;
 - Degree in Law (where a focus in International Law, International Refugee Law or International Human Rights Law would be an asset). In the absence of a Degree in Law, candidates **must** possess a **strong working knowledge of refugee law and RSD procedures**, as well as have experience in assisting refugee claimants;
 - Experience working in direct client services, ideally with refugees in particular or in human rights in general, guided by a strong passion for social justice work;
 - Experience in interviewing individuals to obtain complex information, as well as the ability to deal with confidential and sensitive information professionally;
 - Possesses strong legal writing and drafting skills;
 - Possesses good analytical skills and judgment;
 - Experience working with vulnerable populations and/or survivors of trauma;
 - Experience in community engagement;
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- Experience working in a non-profit or legal aid setting with limited resources;
- Ability to live and work in a multicultural environment in Southeast Asia, in a setting with a large refugee population;
- Aptitude to prioritise and successfully complete assigned tasks with minimal oversight, while serving clients with the highest ethical standards;
- Ability to work as part of a team and to follow the direction of AAM management staff;
- A positive personality with demonstrated capacity to handle living and working in an ad-hoc environment, where difficult situations may arise unexpectedly;
- Professional written and verbal English is **mandatory**, while knowledge of other languages (Malay, Burmese, Arabic, Tamil, Urdu, Somali, Farsi, French) is a strong asset.

Program Highlights

Refugee Rights Training and Professional Development – Throughout the VLAs’ work with AAM, the organization will support VLAs with a series of tools to maximize their programmatic work and their understanding of refugee law and practice. Regular training and debriefing sessions will offer VLAs the chance to enhance and process their experience and share insight about cross-cultural issues.

Casework – Upon joining the team, VLAs will be largely responsible for their own casework, which they will see through preparation, submission and results. Throughout the life of a case, they will receive support and mentorship from AAM’s leadership team. This will give VLAs the practical experience of legal representation, client contact, research, brief writing, and other invaluable legal experience.

Joining our Network – After working with Asylum Access, VLAs will be connected with an ever-growing network of refugee legal advocates around the world, which circulates job openings, research opportunities, refugee news, and more. VLAs will also have access to the mentorship of AAM’s leadership team.

How to Apply

1. Please send a cover letter, resume, and a legal writing sample (between 2 - 3 pages) to apply@asylumaccess.org with the subject line “**VLA Application - Malaysia**”.
 2. Please describe your reasons for applying, relevant qualifications, and how volunteering with AAM fits into your career plans. Also, please state the dates you can be expected to be available.
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Applications will be received on a rolling basis. Candidates who are able to commit to a period longer than 6 months will also be prioritised.

Asylum Access is an equal opportunity employer. We celebrate diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees. For more information about our organization, visit www.asylumaccess.org.
