2020 ANNUAL REPORT
Omar Bah, the Founder and Executive Director of the Refugee Dream Center, is a refugee from The Gambia. In 2010, he formed a group with a few other refugees called the Refugee Advocacy Group, which was inspired by observable poor housing conditions among refugees in RI. This group engaged with local stakeholders to hold resettlement agencies and landlords accountable, and to create awareness about this health disparity. In 2012, Omar and the other members of the cohort founded the Center for Refugee Advocacy and Support, which established this work as an official nonprofit organization. In 2015, the organization's members naturally parted ways as they took on other projects in the community.

Omar’s passion for advocacy for refugees remained strong - he realized the need to combine advocacy with direct services in order to effect change in the refugee community. This inspired the development of the Refugee Dream Center (RDC), which he co-founded with Teddi Jallow in 2015. As Executive Director, he has supervised and managed all programs at the RDC since its inception. The development of the Refugee Dream Center was born out of a need for:

- A continuation of services after assistance through resettlement agencies
- Bridges between the refugee community and the receiving American community to help refugees have a voice
- A collaborative approach to direct services of refugees helping refugees, rather than the top-down style of Americans helping refugees to integrate
- A common ground for cultural exchange among all refugee communities
The Refugee Dream Center (RDC) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) post-resettlement refugee organization based in Providence, Rhode Island. We offer support to the local community to ensure continuation of services in refugees’ efforts towards self-sufficiency and integration. We achieve this through culturally attuned programming, which, over the course of 2020, was delivered using both in-person and remote methods. We tailor our direct services to the short and long-term needs of the individuals we serve.
Over the course of 2020, the RDC saw a rise in clientele, totaling to 1200+ individuals (compared to a steady 300, annually). Of this population, approximately half are refugees, hailing from over nineteen countries of origin, including: Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Burundi, Haiti, The Gambia, DR Congo, Senegal, Mauritania, and Sudan. The majority of our clients come from low-income backgrounds, and include both seniors/older adults, youth, and refugees with disabilities.

WHO WE SERVE

CLIENT SERVICES

We offer services under the following categories:

- Case Management
- Adult Education (ESL & Workforce Development, Financial Literacy)
- Health Promotion
- Youth Mentoring
- Advocacy
COVID-19 RELIEF

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, our typical client services looked different this year. Food security, financial assistance, unemployment help, and COVID-19 outreach were thrust to the forefront, as the communities we serve are at highest risk of exposure.

To accommodate public health guidelines, we shifted the bulk of our programming to remote formats, which involved increased reliance on phone calls, computers, and internet connection in order to reach the population. We performed socially-distanced in-person check-ins as well, along with PPE, food, and supply distributions to households to ensure stay-at-home orders could be followed, and to keep families connected to emergency resources.

- **CRAFTED INFORMATIONAL COVID-19 RELATED AUDIOS IN**
  - **5 LANGUAGES** (ENGLISH, SWAHILI, SOMALI, FRENCH, ARABIC)

- **SERVING**
  - **1200 (INCLUDING THE LARGER IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY)**

- **AN AVERAGE OF**
  - **150 CALLS PER WEEK SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC**

- PRIMARY ACTIVITIES
  - Continuous case management - direct service with the Rhode Island refugee community to provide support through the pandemic, such as applying for benefits, rental assistance, etc.
  - Production and dissemination of translated resources and information on safely navigating the pandemic and accessing government resources
  - Purchase, transportation and distribution of necessities including food, kitchen supplies and cleaning products/critical health supplies
  - Support families with accessing and utilizing digital services
  - Connected clients to resources for unemployment insurance or TDI when necessary
In June, we safely brought the local community together, maintaining adult education, financial literacy, and health awareness classes in a remote format. Through this celebration, we raised $2,750!
We provide direct and individualized services to our refugee clients, and this remained the case throughout 2020. The RDC staff worked together to determine how to address exacerbated needs in the areas of housing, employment, awareness campaigning (COVID, employment, cultural), health promotion (lead safety, housing, medication management, preventative health awareness), donations assistance, social service referrals, interpreting support, and assistance with applications for adjustment of legal permanent resident status, asylee status, or citizenship status.

**"Individual & Family Support" includes help with food, rental payments, and PPE/hygienic supply provisions**

Case Management services are crucial for refugees at the post-resettlement level (6 months - 5 years), when they no longer receive services from resettlement agencies. These needs were exacerbated by the pandemic, prompting our expanded response efforts.
The Adult Education Program consists of ESL classes, Workforce Development, Financial Literacy, and Mentoring.

**ESL** centers around attaining self-sufficiency and employment prospects by learning functional English language skills and basic computer skills.

**Workforce Development and Financial Literacy** facilitates competence-based job development. We partner with employers that have shown interest in hiring refugees.

**Mentoring** was created to address the need for more intensive and focused ESL assistance, cultural balancing and workforce skill development. Mentors assist with daily tasks that a client may need help with, such as practice using public transportation, grocery shopping, trips to other areas in Providence, or even visiting public locales for entertainment.

Accounting for the COVID-19 pandemic, Adult ESL classes shifted to a remote learning landscape. This came with significant challenges, as many of our clients have very limited technical proficiency as well as access. However, we were able to manage 1:1 classes for a group of 30 students, held mostly through WhatsApp calls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>33 Total Active Volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$16,353 Value Volunteer Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,422 Total Volunteer Hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 30 active ESL students
- 27 active ESL volunteer tutors
- 4 active Health Promotion volunteers
- 2 mentorship program volunteers
- 30 remote sessions per week
- 1:1 average student to volunteer ratio
Through Refugee Youth Dream, young adults are mentored and supported in meaningful activities geared toward reducing traumatic challenges. These activities serve to improve their social functioning skills, prevent truancy and gang affiliation, increase college entrance potential, and propel them into community service and leadership. The program effectively accelerates the refugee integration process through friendships with American peers and improved English language skills.

This year, we worked closely with Brown Refugee Youth Tutoring and Enrichment (BRYTE) to ensure youth families had access to Chromebooks to support their online studies. Furthermore, we offered a summer youth employment program for 20 local Providence students, and distributed 20k worth of academic scholarships to a select group of seven (scholarship program is ongoing).

$ 20k Total in Scholarships
AND MORE TO COME!

Summer Youth Employment: 20 participants

INTRODUCTION TO CASE MANAGEMENT FIELD/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS
8 Survivor Leaders: self-motivated leaders of the refugee community (four men and four women) were chosen to represent four major refugee ethnic communities.

2019 training focused on: ethics, domestic violence, identity theft, culturally attuned services, interpreting skills, and leadership development.

In 2020, Survivor Leaders applied their training while assisting the case management team in COVID-19 relief efforts. They were routinely involved in supply distributions and providing translation services when needed.

A culturally-attuned intervention project focused on helping refugee community leaders harness their intrinsic skills, and the facilitation and capacity-building of refugees to overcome the challenges associated with their experiences of crime.
Rakia Islam  
Programs Manager

"The Refugee Dream Center is considered a "home" for so many, and I understand why. At the heart of our work is a cultural and emotional sensitivity that is vital to trauma-informed service and care. I am thrilled to see the organization continue to grow, especially now as we navigate such a transformative time in all social arenas."

Denise Perez  
Data and Evaluation Specialist

"As a new staff member of the RDC team, I have quickly witnessed the unmatched passion and dedication of our team. I feel extremely privileged to be a part of an organization that has worked tirelessly through this pandemic to serve and uplift Rhode Island’s refugee community. Although COVID-19 has impacted all of our programs, our clients have remained engaged and our team has shown resilience. I look forward to continuing learning about the refugee experience in America and the ways in which we can continue to support and uplift this community."
"I find that despite the challenges of teaching/learning remotely, I am inspired by my students' dedication and energy. I feel fortunate to work at a school where we have strengthened our skills at teaching our students remotely and I’m able to apply that knowledge with the ESL model RDC has provided. I truly value the relationship with Gertrude (my student) and look forward to the day we are able to meet in-person but until then we will try to have as much fun as we can through our computer screens building our connection and her language skills."

Nicole Newby Crossley, Volunteer

Pictured: Teddi Jallow assisting a family of 5. The husband of the woman pictured is sick and unable to work. She applied for unemployment benefits 3 months ago, and has not yet received assistance. RDC provided her a rental assistance check and a basket of food and supplies.
I have received essential soap, detergent, food and even assistance paying my bills. Times are hard right now. It’s too hard right now. I am not working and I have 3 kids. I am very satisfied and happy with the support of the center. Isabel always responds right away. She’s so nice.

I used to be a part of the ESL program but now, with the pandemic, I am no longer taking classes. I am at home with my kids, it is difficult to keep taking classes, even virtually. Maybe in the future I can start taking classes again.

Fathia Afi, Refugee Community Member, Somalia

I am a mother of two that has been with the RDC for 1.5 years. I have a son and a daughter. I am a part of the ESL program and I virtually meet with my tutor once per week. The Refugee Dream Center has been very helpful with paying bills, providing my family with cleaning supplies, and food. Isabel is very helpful. With Providence being so expensive, it gets hard. I wish I’d receive more help with applying for children’s clothes and diapers.

Maryam Alwakeel, Refugee Community Member, Syria
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Individual Contributions $81,588.27
Donations $233,217.02
Fiscal Agent Income $4,000.00
Grant Revenue $501,623.74

Total Revenue: $820,429.03
Expenditures

Total Expenses: $372,753.75
Accounting & Legal Fees 1,180.00
Advertising & Marketing 98.00
Bank Charges & Fees 129.38
Basic Human Need - Housing Assistance 16,141.86
Basic Human Need - Utilities Assistance 3,844.18
Car & Truck 1,048.70
Computer Equipment 6,014.53
Employee Benefits 817.92
Employee Development Expenses 100.00
Employer 401k Contribution Expense 5,195.60
Employer Tax Expense 32,782.70
Event Expenses 1,420.00
Fiscal Agent Salaries 4,000.00
Food & Housing Security 1,662.80
Food and Supplies 68,429.43
Health Insurance 19,541.22
Immigration Filings and Legal Fees 4,457.00
Insurance 9,231.30
Intern Stipends 83,800.85
Legal & Professional Services 1,933.43
Meals & Entertainment 786.47
Mileage and Travel 19,033.10
Office Supplies & Software 8,839.40
Other Business Expenses 6,189.46
Payroll Agency Expenses 7,326.57
Program Contractors 2,760.00
Refugee Integration Assistance 6,120.24
Rent & Lease 9,768.00
Salaries & Wages 369,993.79
Scholarships and Student Assistance 12,311.23
Storage Fees 1,688.17
Taxes & Licenses 484.77
U-Haul Truck Rental 1,427.65
Utilities 67.69
Website hosting expense 395.64
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OUR PARTNERS

Dorcas International Institute of RI
Childhood Lead Action Project
Office of Workforce Development & Economic Opportunity
New Bridges for Haitian Success
Southside Community Land Trust
Rhode Island Coalition against Domestic Violence
Amos House
Sweerer Center at Brown University
Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University
RISD Moses Brown School
The Sage School
Genesis Center
RI Hospital
RI Commission on Prejudice & Bias
Lifespan Health System
Women and Infants Hospital
Randstad Holding
Beautiful Day
Edesia Inc.
Jewish Alliance RI
Renaissance Church
Unitarian Universalist Church
Islamic Center of RI
Cranston Christian Fellowship
Catholic Diocese of Providence
Camp RYSE (Refugee Youth Solidarity through Education)
Refugee Youth Power Summit
Mayor’s Substance Abuse Prevention Council
Central Providence Health Equity Zone
Woonsocket Health Equity Zone
02907 Health Equity Zone
Community Action Team
Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma
Seekonk Huddle Group
Women’s Action Initiative Immigration Committee
of the South County Huddle Group
Allstate Foundation
Tufts University

PUBLIC & PRIVATE FUNDERS

RI Department of Public Safety (Victims of Crime Act)
Department of Labor & Training
Rhode Island Foundation
Providence Healthy Communities Office
Providence Office of Economic Opportunity
Islamic Relief USA
RI Department of Health
Department of Administration
United Way
Haymarket People’s Fund
Lifespan
Eastern Bank
Neighborhood Health Plan
The Providence Project
The Partnership Foundation
100+ Women Who Care
Bank Newport
Tufts Health Plan
Sterling Bank
RESIST
The Nature Conservancy
Nellie Mae Foundation
Environmental Protection Agency
The Champlin Foundation

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Mike Coburn and Carol Lewis
Beatrice Thrums/ 7 yrs old girl
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