

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

A YEAR OF RESILIENCE



Refugee Dream Center

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Foreword



**We are a home
away from home.
We are your
village. You
belong here.**

Dr. Omar Bah and Teddi Jallow, the Co-Founders of the Refugee Dream Center, are refugees from The Gambia. In 2010, Dr. Bah 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, Dr. Bah 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.

Dr. Bah's passion for advocacy for refugees remained strong, but 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. Together, the pair envisioned a place where every refugee who found themselves in Rhode Island could feel at home. Years later, the center uplifts thousands of individuals on their journeys toward self-sufficiency.

2021 was a year of resilience. It was a year of recovery and grit, not just for those served by the RDC but also for its dedicated team of staff and volunteers. The ending of this story is not yet written – there is still much work to do and lives to impact, for the better. The RDC thanks you for embarking on this journey with us; and looks forward to carrying this momentum into the many years ahead.



Teddi Jallow
Co-founder and Executive Director
Refugee Dream Center



Dr. Omar Bah
Co-founder and Director of Programs
Refugee Dream Center



Refugee Dream Center

INTRODUCTION

The Refugee Dream Center (RDC) was created in 2015 to serve as a venue of culture and resource exchange for the refugee community of Rhode Island.

Refugees come to Rhode Island from 20 to 30 countries, evenly divided among men and women, ranging in ages from infants to 80 years. Between 2002 and 2019, 3,033 refugees were resettled in Rhode Island, with 2,886 resettled in the city of Providence alone (Providence Journal Data Central data from the Refugee Processing Center). The conflict in Afghanistan brought an additional ~ 400 refugees to Rhode Island in 2021, with an expected total of approximately 1000 evacuees by 2022.

Generally, the cash assistance that refugees receive through the federal government supports them only for a short time, as they are expected to be self-sufficient within the first few months of their arrival in the United States. However, achieving self-sufficiency is a slow process for people with a number of challenges, including: language, transportation, employment barriers, cultural barriers, and general adjustment issues. The RDC targets specific gaps in related services that

exist and fill them from a culturally appropriate and trauma-informed perspective.

Mission

The Refugee Dream Center is a post-resettlement refugee agency. We offer services targeting gaps within the refugee community by ensuring the continuation of services in efforts towards self-sufficiency and integration. The organization does referrals, social level assistance, and skills development such as English language education for adults, health promotion and cultural orientation, youth mentoring, and case management. In addition, the RDC is a strong advocacy agency for the rights of refugees.

Vision

The Refugee Dream Center is a common venue for the enhancement of cultural and community development in the refugee population of Rhode Island. Refugees are provided the opportunity to learn new skills, receive case management support and job training, and network in a diverse setting. Refugees therefore have the opportunity to integrate into the larger American society by interacting and sharing their unique cultures and skills at the Center.

WHEN COVID-19 HIT OUR COMMUNITIES,

WE SPRUNG INTO ACTION

THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES MEANT WE FACED THE GREATEST NEED FOR SUPPORT AMONG REFUGEES THAN EVER BEFORE

To date, more than **2,600** refugees have received some form of public health intervention from the RDC in response to the pandemic.

2,600+
INDIVIDUALS

Provided with:

- PPE & Cleaning Supplies
- Basic Human Needs
- Translated COVID-19 Guidance
- Interpreting & Transportation Support
- Referrals
- Case Management



OUR PROGRAMS

We operate 4 core programs: Adult Education, Case Management, Health Promotion, and Youth Mentoring



Refugee Dream Center

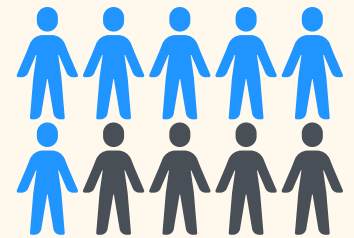
ADULT EDUCATION

- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESL) classes
- Workforce Development
- Financial Literacy
- Citizenship Classes

Our curricula are focused on interpersonal English language, crucial job skills, and vocabulary, and related to U.S. history and civics. Since the learner proficiency levels vary immensely, differentiated instruction styles serve the unique needs of each participant, and use one-on-one mentoring to support learning.

YOUTH MENTORING

One-on-one and group mentoring for **150+** refugee and American youth



95.6%
REVENUE APPLIED TO
PROGRAM SERVICES

HEALTH PROMOTION

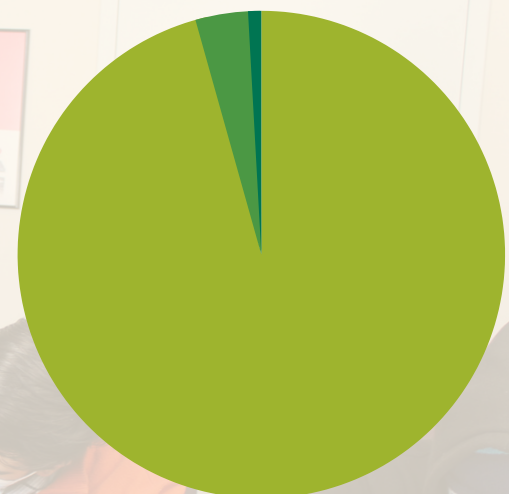
- JOURNEY TO HEALTH: PREVENTATIVE HEALTH EDUCATION
- HEALTH HOME VISITS AND LEAD SAFETY AWARENESS
- PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

CASE MANAGEMENT

- Health Insurance/Benefits Assistance
- ID/Documentation Assistance
- Immigration Services/Referrals
- Clothing & Household Goods
- Educational Support Services
- Job Search/Placement
- Job Training
- Emergency Food
- SNAP/WIC/Other Nutrition Benefits, TANF/Cash Assistance Program, Unemployment Benefits Navigation
- Behavioral Medication Management
- Chronic Disease Prevention & Management
- Interpretation Services
- Transportation Expense Assistance

Management & General

3.5%



Program Services

95.6%



BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

We are grateful for the **75+ volunteers and interns** who help us year-round to advance our mission and deliver services to over 60 ESL students.

Breaking Barriers:

A group of 8 highly motivated members of the refugee community, four men and four women, were chosen to represent the four refugee ethnic communities. This is a culturally attuned intervention project focused on the facilitation and capacity building of the refugees' ability to overcome the challenges associated with their experiences of crime and harness their intrinsic skills to assist the case management team in providing services to refugees.

Breaking Barriers "Survivor Leaders," along with our dedicated team of interns and volunteers, make our expansive reach possible. Thank you.



Pictured: Brown University interns Morgan Delancey and Catherine Neili co-teaching ESL students at the RDC

EMPOWERING YOUTH

BY BRIDGING CULTURES

We reach over **150 youth** through several projects, including our youth employment program, our youth mentoring group called Refugee Youth Dream, Camp RYSE, and Refugee Youth Power Summit.

OVER \$40K

**IN STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS
& ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO
REFUGEE YOUTH**

AMERICAN YOUTH

- Exposed to global cultures
- Enables them to expand their understanding of different populations
- Cultural attunement
- Embrace diversity
- Fulfill community service needs
- Become advocates for the cause of refugees and human rights

Leadership Self-Esteem

- Discourage substance abuse and misuse
- Sexual and reproductive health awareness
- Positive environment
- Empowering voices
- Fostering community unity
- Increasing awareness about refugees
- Promoting acceptance of refugees
- Storytelling skills
- Film-making skills
- Educational support
- Public speaking skills

REFUGEE YOUTH

- Mental health support
- Trauma intervention
- Resilience building
- Help with integration into American society
- Improve English language skills
- Minimize/eliminate truancy
- Minimize/eliminate gang violence and crime-related involvement
- Encourage completion of high school and college enrollment
- Build storytelling skills





Spotlight: Kamar Gure

Kamar is a refugee from Somalia. She arrived in the United States in February of 2017 from a refugee camp in Kenya, where she was born and raised. Kamar is a sophomore at Rhode Island College, where she is majoring in the medical field. Currently, she works with our team as our Youth Coordinator. She is passionate about helping and uplifting others, going out, and learning different languages and cultures.

"I remember the first time I came to the Refugee Dream Center. I felt like I was home - everyone was so welcoming, and I met so many great people. I joined a few years ago as a participant in their youth program. Not long after that, I became one of their Dream Leaders. The Refugee Dream Center gave me a tremendous amount of support and opportunities which I am really grateful for. I am honored to now serve as their Youth Program Coordinator, helping to run the same program that I enjoyed so much."

Kamar Gure, RDC Youth Coordinator





Impact Stories

1

"I am a mother of two who has been with the RDC for almost 2 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 bills I am struggling to pay off and 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 buying children's clothes and diapers."

- Maryam Alwakeel, Refugee Community Member, Syria

2

Since coming to the US from Nigeria in 2015, the RDC has helped Taiwo Olukoga build a new life. Taiwo struggles to support her three kids and care for her elderly mother.

"I didn't have food in the house... I could not go to people's houses or to church. I could not go anywhere," she said.

Teddi, the RDC co-founder, helped Taiwo obtain a donated car and taught her to drive. Now Taiwo works caring for elderly people, and is able to work overtime driving patients to and from the hospital. In the future, Taiwo wants to continue studying in

ESL at the center and hopes that her thirteen year old daughter will get involved in the youth program.

"At the Refugee Dream Center, they know what's going on in my life. They know what I don't know and they say 'come in, we'll help. I always receive help with utility bills or rent if I do not have enough. The center has helped my family a lot since 2015."

- Taiwo Olukoga, Refugee Community Member, Nigeria

3

"I am very grateful and happy with RDCs services since 2017. The clothes, food, and rent assistance are a big deal for me. Thank you. I have a big family, 7 kids, and I am in need of household items and food. Their youth program is always very great because it gives a place for my kids to go. Thank you to the center and the donors. My family needs the help. And I am honored to be able to help the community in return through the RDC Breaking Barriers project. I've learned so much.

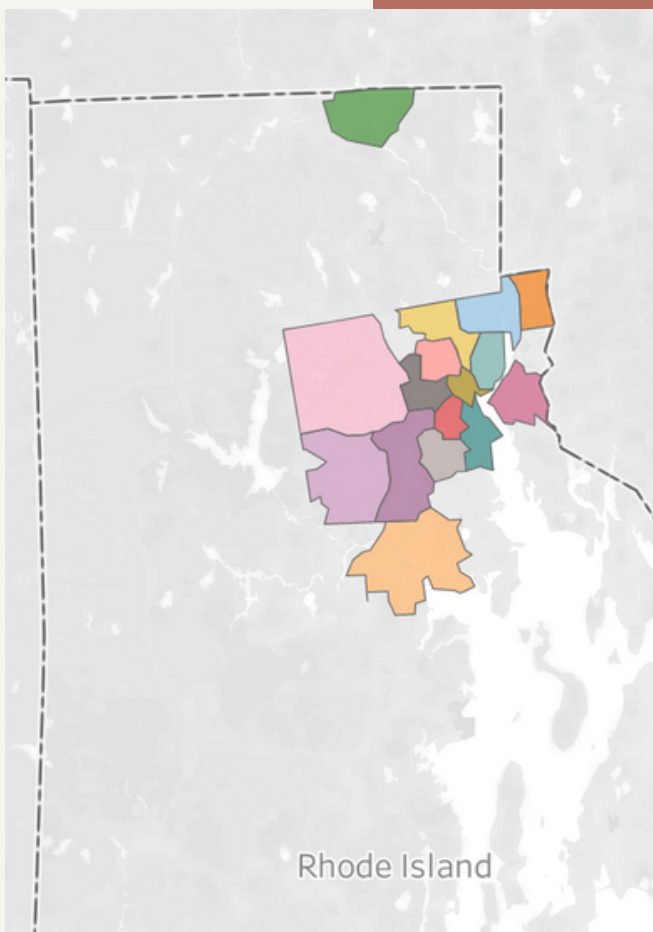
- Fortunata Chantal Kasika, Breaking Barriers Survivor Leader



DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Geographic Focus: Providence (highest concentration), Woonsocket (second highest), Pawtucket, Central Falls, Cranston, Johnston, North Providence, Cumberland, and Warwick

IN PROVIDENCE AND BEYOND



With the arrival of hundreds of newcomers to Rhode Island from Afghanistan, RDC has stepped in to connect these individuals to employment opportunities.

Over the course of 2021, RDC successfully placed more than **300 clients** - both new and existing - into jobs. Over **1500 adults** receive some form of job training and support in order to advance their economic standing.

Our team focuses not only on job placement, but also **job retention**. We work with each individual to determine how best to address their needs in the areas of housing, employment, education, transportation, health, social service referrals, interpreting support, and other types of assistance so they may have the ability to achieve self-sufficiency.



BEGINNING NEW CHAPTERS

ON THE PATH TO CITIZENSHIP

In-person U.S. citizenship classes resumed in October 2021, taught by long-term volunteer tutor, Len Newman. Mr. Newman and a group of 6 students continue to meet once a week at the center to prepare for their exams. Other students work with 1:1 mentors to gain additional support in their studies.

Congratulations to all in the RDC family who can now call themselves American citizens, and to those who remain determined in their pursuit of one of the proudest achievements a refugee, immigrant, or asylum-seeker can have.



Refugee Dream Center



Thank you.

To our supporters and partners, thank you for helping Rhode Islanders rebuild their lives and overcome barriers to self-sufficiency.

Partners

University of Rhode Island
Brown University
Rhode Island College
Moses Brown
The Wheeler School
Phillips Memorial Baptist Church
First Unitarian Church of Providence
Church of the Ascension/ The Discretionary Fund
Jewish Alliance of Greater Rhode Island
The McKay Family Charity Fund
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Pilot House Associates, LLC.
Troop PVD (Laughing Gorilla LLC)
The Perry Group, LLC
The Rhode Island Foundation
United Way of Rhode Island
The Champlin Foundation
Shapiro Foundation
The Providence Project
RI Department of Labor & Training
RI Department of Human Services
RI Department of Health
Dorcas International Institute of RI
City of Providence Healthy Communities Office
City of Providence Office of Economic Opportunity
The Nature Conservancy
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office for Victims of Crime
RI Council for the Humanities
CARE New England
Schwab Charitable
Fidelity Charitable
Community Action Partnership of Providence
Central Providence Health Equity Zone
Woonsocket Health Equity Zone
West Elmwood Health Equity Zone
One Neighborhood Builders
PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation
West Elmwood Housing Development Corp
Commissioned Officers Foundation
Distracted Globe Foundation
Vanguard Charitable
Bosco's Department Store, LLC
Simple Pleasures the Forge
New England Resident Service Coordinators INC
Langevin for Congress
The Cicilline Committee
Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island
Lifespan
ONEHOPE
Community Action Partnership of Providence
Tufts Health Plan
Eastern Bank Foundation
Pawtucket Credit Union
Bank Newport
Verizon Foundation
Providence City Council
Network for Good
Hasbro Children's Hospital
Children's Choice Pediatrics, LLC
Rhode Island Fencing Academy and Club
Nellie Mae Education Foundation
Islamic Relief USA

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Amanda Blevins
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Amy Karageorgos
Anthony Hans
Benden Ken
Elyse V Trinth
Ora E. Wry
Kate Gillis

Financial Statement

January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021



Refugee Dream Center

Category	Total
REVENUE	\$1,203,373.00
A. Donations (Individual, Corporate, In-Kind)	A. \$237,612.00
B. Grants (Includes PPP Loan Forgiveness)	B. \$870,361.00
C. Sales	C. \$17,400.00
D. Fiscal Agent Income	D. \$78,000.00
EXPENSES	\$957,622.00
A. Personnel (Salaries, stipends, employee benefits, etc.)	A. \$525,424.00
B. Accounting & Office Expenses	B. \$132,769.00
C. Basic Human Needs for Clients	C. \$226,607.00
D. Immigration & Legal Fees	D. \$12,426.00
E. Transportation (Truck Rentals)	E. \$3573.00
F. Travel Expenses (Mileage and client travel assistance)	F. \$32,293.00
G. Fiscal Agent Expenses	G. \$18,849.00
H. Depreciation	H. \$5684.00
NET INCOME	\$369,825.00
A. Net Assets at Beginning of Year	A. \$124,074.00
B. Change in Net Assets	B. \$245,751.00

How you can help RDC

Your contribution makes a world of difference in our ability to meet basic needs and provide psychosocial support for refugees of all backgrounds.



DONATE

Visit our website at www.refugeedreamcenter.org/make-a-donation. For in-kind donations, please email info@refugeedreamcenter.org



VOLUNTEER

Your time and effort are more than enough contribution. Please send volunteer inquiries to: volunteer.refugeedreamcenter@gmail.com

ENGAGE

Follow us on social media for the latest updates on our work. You may also sign up for our newsletter at www.refugeedreamcenter.org



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