

# **AFRICAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**

2022-2023

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

**Number of people and organizations benefited from our services:** African Services Committee (ASC) engaged with over 1,500 people, providing them a combination of information, legal advice, limited legal services, and full representation on various immigration forms of relief. ASC closed 995 cases, which assisted 1007 people. ASC conducted a total of 872 intakes during this year. The 289 cases closed with a miscellaneous benefit were cases where we provided HIV+ individuals who do not qualify for an immigration lawful status with a letter certifying these circumstances so they could qualify for housing and other benefits provided by New York City for HIV+ people living under these circumstances

**Dollar or other benefits realized by low income people as a direct result of our efforts:** ASC secured \$55,263.91 worth of fee waivers from USCIS and fee assistance for clients who were either unable to secure a fee waiver or could not afford fees for applications; experts; or specialists.

**Increased access to justice or improvements in the administration of justice:** Through our ActionNYC program we have partnered with the NYC Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Affairs to receive referrals from their legal hotline. Additionally, we direct referrals of complex cases through a network who receive IOI funding grants. We have also joined several partnerships between different community-based organizations such as the Bronx Immigration Partnership, BronxWorks, and the Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative (I-ARC) to participate in the referral networks established by these cooperatives. Further, we have partnership with CLINIC and the National Immigration Project where we receive trainings and help with DOJ accreditation, and on-call lawyers to answer complex questions.



**Population Served:** members of the African diaspora; immigrants of all backgrounds, people living with HIV or AIDS; people who identify as LGBTQ; and existing clients for ASC’s non-legal programs; low income populations

**Area Served:** Bronx, Kings, Montgomery, Nassau, New York, Queens, Westchester

**Staffing Full Time Equivalent:**

- Total Staff: 12.60
- Paralegals: 3
- Lawyers: 3.60
- Other: 6

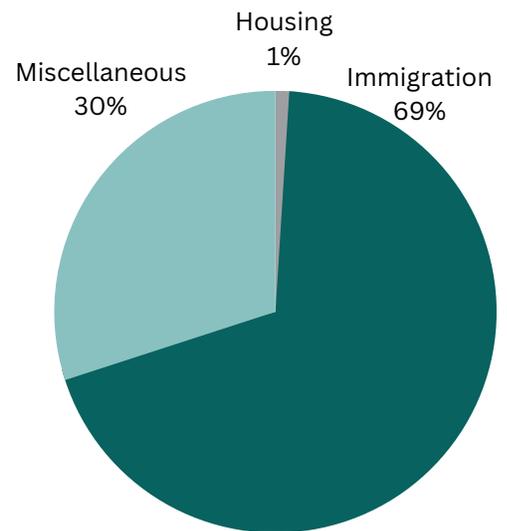
# DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES: CASES

Beyond meeting all the goals laid out for this fiscal year, the legal team also employed the flexibility of the Healthy Horizons program to provide more services to children and youth than the previous year. Specifically, AV, a survivor of domestic violence and a former client of the African Services Committee Legal Department, requested assistance with getting her three children green cards based on her approved Violence Against Women Act Self Petition. The issue was time sensitive as two of her three children needed to apply in time to qualify for financial aid in order to pursue higher education. The Legal Advocate was able to help all three of AV’s children quickly apply for adjustment of status and meet their financial aid deadline.

The flexibility of the Healthy Horizons program also allowed the Mental Health Counselor from ASC to accompany a transgender client with a pending asylum case to a psychiatric evaluation and interpret for the client in French. The evaluation not only benefited the client’s legal case but also helped her process the trauma she experienced in her home country.

Under the ActionNYC program, we assisted a permanently disabled client submit an adjustment of status application under the Cuban Adjustment Act. The individual had previously applied over 20 years ago and was denied for procedural reasons. His properly submitted Form I-290B was never considered or acted upon by USCIS. After numerous contacts to the USCIS Ombudsman, we decided to file a new Form I-485 application for this client, so that he could access urgently needed public health insurance and focus on the other important housing, medical and financial challenges in his life. His new I-148 application was approved in January 2023 and the client is now a permanent resident.

**1,007  
people  
benefitted  
from  
995 legal  
cases  
closed**



**Cases by Legal Problem Area**

# OTHER SERVICES: OVERVIEW

ASC had reached over 250 participants via Community Legal Education within the 2 contract years. ASC's goal is to reach not only its clients, but also its target population: (1) members of the African diaspora; (2) immigrants of all backgrounds; (3) people living with HIV or AIDS; (4) people who identify as LGBTQ; (5) people that have experienced mental trauma and are seeking counseling and legal services; (6) men and women who are survivors of gender-based violence because the current level of victim services in the community. ASC's goal is to inform the community members of the changes in law that would affect them and their cases, to make sure the community members know and understand their rights and services provided by ASC.

## 1,118 People Benefitted from Community Legal Education Services

ASC held a successful Know Your Rights session via zoom. The presentation covered legal issues (Interactions with ICE, forms of relief that are not always known by the community) and the emotional toll that immigration process has on people. The presentation was done in three languages with participation of one three legal team members and our Mental Health Counselor.

We have printed over 1,000 Red Cards in French, Spanish and English to help our clients assert their rights and defend themselves in many situations, including their constitutional rights in the event of an encounter with ICE agents.

ASC's main strategy is using technology, including social media and websites formatted for smartphones to facilitate outreach by posting information of social media sites, ASC's website, and other sites frequented by the target population.

As part of the Rapid Response to the Migrant Arrivals organized by the NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), the Action NYC legal team was asked to participate in a pro bono asylum intake center in midtown Manhattan to screen individuals and provide them with information, legal advice and fill out pro-bono change of venues and help them with ICE-check in appointments. Two members of our legal staff attended this clinic in person, filling out 8 Motions to change venue and various ICE-check in appointments.

## OTHER SERVICES: TECHNOLOGY

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ASC has been actively using various technology improvements to be able to switch to remote work, such as: (i) conducting meetings via zoom; (ii) using whatsapp group for emergencies; (iii) using gchat; (iv) utilizing google voice to make phone calls; (v) utilizing google drive and its applications for collaborative group projects.

We have successfully implemented a hotline for ASC's intakes, they're fully remote and handled by interns, law students and legal staff. Our hotline is available in 3 different languages: English, Spanish and French. Through the Action NYC program, we continue having access to a Language line that provides interpreters in +200 languages available to screen individuals in their native language.

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## OTHER SERVICES: TRAININGS

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ASC offers training and professional development activities to staff, management, volunteers and board members. ASC provides regular substantive trainings to staff through Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), Practicing Law Institute (PLI), New York Immigrant Coalition (NYIC) and Community Service Society (CSS) Benefits Plus.

ASC also conducts trainings covering topics such as diversity and inclusion, anti-oppression, cultural competency, and HIPAA both in person or as webinars. One of our legal advocates will attend the CLINIC Convening 2023 to be hosted in Phoenix, AZ, which is an annual conference that brings together legal practitioners, advocates and nonprofit leaders from all over the country to network, learn and gain insight about the current state of immigration law.

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# PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

ASC was able to successfully utilize various kinds of volunteer help who contributed a total of 6,730.00 hours. ASC engaged 1 volunteer Attorney Emeritus Program, 15 undergrad students and 24 law students doing pro bono hours.

We continued our efficiency with the help of our Intake Manager who maintained effective recruitment efforts, crafted and recorded intake trainings, perfected training protocols and contributed to the streamlining of the intake and consultation process. We continued to develop a more structured volunteer program and a system to match students' course requirements with the legal department needs by providing them with comprehensive trainings, regular check-ins and communicating via email and phone. ASC also worked with a large number of students from Columbia Law School ("CLS") who were looking to fulfill their 40 CLS and 50 NY Bar requirement and who helped our team immensely with substantive work during a period of substantial staff turnover and increased volume of work.



**1 Attorneys volunteered 50 hours**

**24 Law Students volunteered 5,930 hours**

**15 Other Volunteers volunteered 750 hours**

Each  icon is equal to 4 volunteers.

Law Students are represented through the Green Figure.

Attorneys and Other Volunteers are represented through the Grey Figure.

# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

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ASC participates in the following collaborations:

**I-ARC** – a collaboration between New York immigration legal providers created in response to the challenges of practicing immigration. Participants include Center for the Interrogation and Advancement of New Americans, the City University of New York, NYU Immigrant Defense Initiative, UJC, Sanctuary for Families, Safe Passage, Lutheran Social Services of NY, Catholic Migration Services, UnLocal, Catholic Charities, City Bar Justice Center, Legal Services NYC, Make the Road, Immigrant Defense Project, KIND, Community Legal Center, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Neighbors Link, Legal Aid Society. ASC participates in the meetings to collaborate with participant organizations and to develop strategies to be able to effectively represent immigrants with the constant changes in immigration policies and procedures.

**Protecting Immigrant Families** – The Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) campaign, is made up of hundreds of diverse organizations. The campaign’s structure allows for the development of innovative advocacy strategies, distribution of educational resources, and keep allies informed of all the current and potential policies that impact immigrant families. The coalition has created multiple ways for organizations to participate in this advocacy. The campaign generated popular opposition to the Trump Administration’s public charge proposal. PIF partners organized protests, developed community education materials, and organized community members to fight back and share their stories. PIF partners empowered communities through advocacy, brought in new diverse partners and community leaders, and engaged grassroots community organizers. PIF partners trained advocates, providers and community members, developed screening tools and educated enrollment workers, held webinars, and engaged community leaders to speak with state health organizations. PIF partners encouraged elected officials to speak up, helped pass county resolutions and engaged state agencies. PIF partners elevated the profile of the threat and leveraged social media, engaged different types of media, and served as a resource and advisory role for media outlets.

**Bronx Immigration Partnership** – The Bronx Immigration Partnership works to unite and increase the capacity of community-based organizations to provide a coordinated safety net of immigration services for new and newly eligible populations in the Bronx who are the most vulnerable to immigration fraud. Although ASC is not based in the Bronx, 48.8% of its clients are Bronx residents, and is therefore accordingly included in this partnership.

Member organizations vary in the type of services they provide to immigrant communities in the Bronx: casework; education; health; and legal. Partner members refer prospective and actual clients to one another for services they cannot provide themselves. Finally, members work together to raise funds for the partnership to be able to provide more and better services for immigrants residing in the Bronx. ASC participates in the monthly meetings to collaborate with participant organizations and to develop strategies to be able to effectively represent immigrants with the constant changes in immigration policies and procedures.

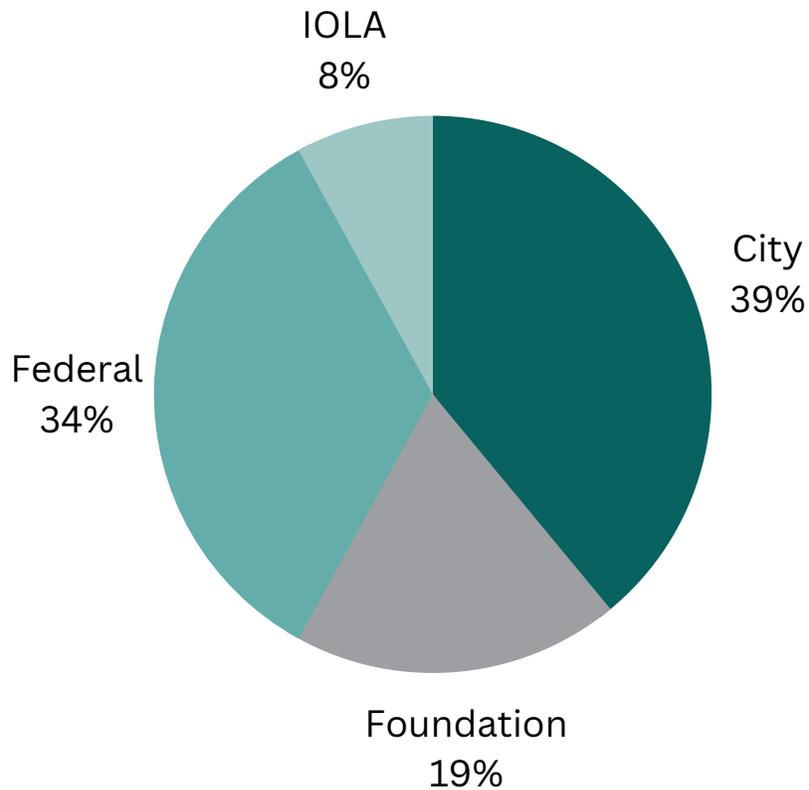
**Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative** – The Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative is made up of over eighty non-profit organizations providing or supporting legal services to New York’s immigrant communities. This consortium creates a network for these organizations throughout New York State to share resources and best practices. The collaborative also works to challenge anti-immigrant policies. ASC participates in the monthly meetings in order to discuss and develop strategies to be able to effectively represent immigrants with the constant changes in immigration policies and procedures. ASC has joined in many advocacy efforts by the collaborative to challenge policy changes harmful to immigrants. ASC has also participated in collaborative efforts to inform the New York City Council on needs and priorities for funding for immigration legal services.

Action NYC through the Mayor's office Immigrant affairs not only do we do this program, participate in the networks, bigger discussions about policies, to tailor programming and services to address the emerging needs e.g. TPS for Ukraine and Cameroon, and most recently the Rapid Response to the Migrant Arrivals in New York City.

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# SOURCES OF FUNDING

African Services Committee received **\$735,190** in total funding this past year



<b>IOLA Grant</b>	<b>\$62,500</b>
<b>Foundations</b>	<b>\$138,324</b>
<b>Federal Funding</b>	<b>\$251,041</b>
<b>City and County Funding</b>	<b>\$283,325</b>
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<b>Total</b>	<b>\$735,190</b>