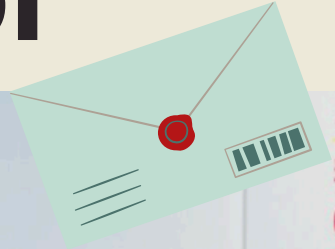


*Artwork: Together, a Better World, Jasmine Chan*

2023

# Impact Report

# Message from our Executive Director



In the heart of Hong Kong, we stand as a crucial lifeline for people who turn to it in their quest for safety. The asylum system in Hong Kong is complex with significant gaps in legal aid and social support.

For those who come here seeking refuge, their immigration status is the crux of their vulnerability. It's what keeps them from starting anew, depriving them of access to resources and opportunities. These individuals also often bear the heavy burden of past torture and traumas and medical and psychological needs.

Building on decades of cumulative asylum and public interest law experience, we train lawyers and connect people with the best legal professionals in town to support their claims for protection and other legal proceedings. We also empower individuals by providing resources and essential legal support and information, helping them navigate their cases.

Simultaneously, we address their immediate welfare and mental health needs, recognising the interconnectedness of these challenges.

With our interventions, those seeking safety have a vastly improved chance of achieving the best possible outcome for their specific situation. Meanwhile, we seek to build systems where people are treated with fairness and compassion. We believe that it is absolutely critical to centre the voices of people with direct experience of displacement, to generate effective services and solutions.

Our presence makes all the difference. We're the bridge that leads people towards safety, inclusion and brighter futures, walking with them every step of the way.

**Lynette Nam, Executive Director**



# Mission & Intended Impact

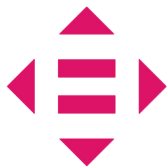
**Justice Centre Hong Kong** is a non-profit organisation that provides free legal, welfare and psychosocial support to refugees, torture survivors and others forcibly displaced. Through strategic and community initiatives we work to ensure displaced peoples have equitable access to high quality services and a voice in our society.

*Our mission is to make sure no one walks alone on the path to protection, justice and a decent life.*

All our work is designed to:

- **achieve better legal outcomes for displaced people** with their protection claims under Hong Kong law and **enhance their well-being** throughout legal proceedings
- help displaced people develop **improved sense of agency and self-efficacy**
- enable practitioners working with displaced people **to deliver appropriate & high-quality support**
- ensure practitioners can **apply positive legal precedents and best practices** with improved access to practitioner resources
- enable laws, policies and practices to **integrate the perspectives and needs of displaced people**
- ensure solutions are **people centred and based on evidence**

**10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES**



**16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**



*Together our intended impact contributes to the achievement of the SDGs.*



*Read our strategy and theory of change here*





# Population & Circumstances

Currently there are over 14,000 forcibly displaced people seeking protection in Hong Kong. Many of them have fled violence or persecution, and survived torture, trafficking or sexual violence in their home country or on their journey.

In Hong Kong, men, women and children **find safety** and receive basic social assistance. But the wait for an outcome on their asylum claim is often lengthy, and full of uncertainty and legal complications. Meanwhile they cannot work and most survive on a government support package that puts them below the poverty line.

**>14,000** <sup>1</sup>  
people

**8%**  
children

**42%**  
female

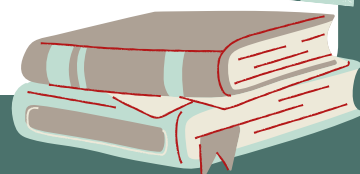


**HK\$40 vouchers per day  
for food and necessities**

**HK\$1500 per month to  
landlord**

**No right to work**<sup>2</sup>

**Barriers to  
higher education**



## The people we serve

**48% Female**

**52% Male**



### Country of Origin: (top 8)



[1] Demographic data based on data provided by ImmD as of 30 June 2023

[2] Substantiated claimants may request permission to work

[3] One person may have experienced multiple forms of violence

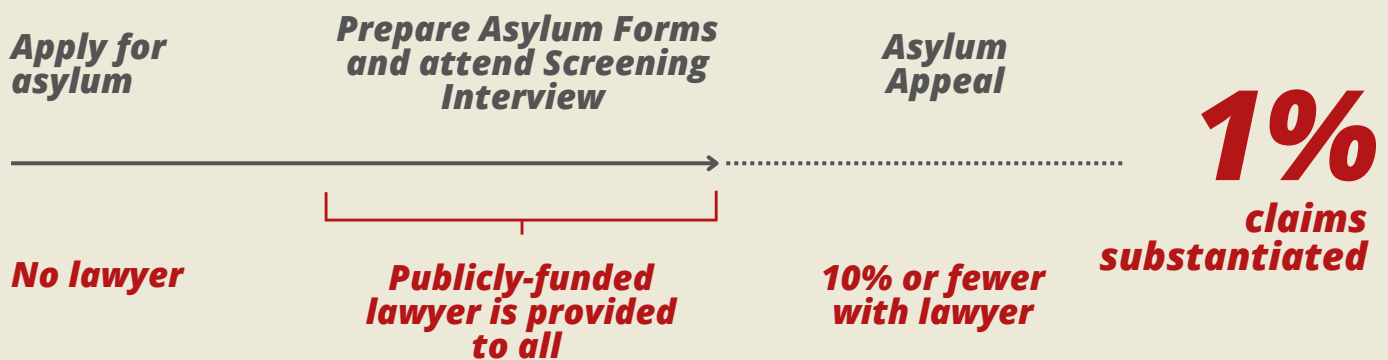


# Access to Justice Gap

## Asylum Process<sup>4</sup>

To claim protection people must navigate a complicated system, in languages with which they might often be unfamiliar. Government-funded legal representation is limited and unavailable at key stages of the process.

No legal help is provided at the outset. In 2022, 90% had to represent themselves on appeal. Only a fraction of asylum claims are accepted. Many risk being returned to a situation where they face serious harm.



*It can take **over 15 years** for an asylum application to be finalised.*

## Immigration Detention

**Admittances into immigration detention in 2019**

**10,053**



Immigration detention is a form of administrative detention, where people are deprived of their liberty without an order of the court. Traumatized persons may be detained for indefinite periods with limited access to legal support.

**Children can be separated** from their detained parents for indefinite periods with limited visitation rights. In some instances this can take up a considerable portion of people's childhood.

[4] While legal meanings differ, "Non-refoulement Protection" and "Asylum" are used interchangeably in this report, for the sake of simplicity.

## TOWARDS IMPACT

# Legal Aid & Empowerment



- Displaced people achieve better legal outcomes
- Displaced people develop improved sense of agency and self-efficacy

Justice Centre's dedicated team of asylum experts and qualified lawyers work with renowned legal firms to provide tailored and in-depth **legal services** to people seeking protection in Hong Kong. Together, we support people through all stages of seeking **non-refoulement protection**.

For people affected by **immigration detention**, we provide information on legal options and support torture survivors to seek redress for unlawful deprivations of liberty.

**105**  
clients received  
individualised,  
in-depth legal  
support

**100%**  
success rate  
seeking redress for  
unlawful detention  
of refugees and  
torture survivors

**83%**  
asylum appeal  
success rate<sup>5</sup>

*"Justice Centre Hong Kong... are very helpful and supportive to our family. When we really need help, they helped us out from all our problems and stand beside us in our difficulties. Justice Centre and the entire team works like a family... and they helped us in every way possible. ... [I was] all alone with [my] small baby boy, and with their help, we got legal aid to help explain the dangers to my baby. ... They were the one who stood by us and help my family... in every way possible."* --A Justice Centre client

With easy to access **LEGAL INFORMATION** we support displaced people to make informed decisions about their situation.

**331** attendances at our community information sessions, enabling people to know & use the law

**7** organisations' frontline staff trained on asylum processes

**> 380** visits to the JCHK Asylum App

**90%** of attendees of info sessions agreed or really agreed that the information was useful to their situation

We supported the development of Know Your Rights materials on immigration detention in collaboration with **CUHK Law**

[5] Appeal representation with our law firm partners, compared to a 1% success rate among the general asylum seeking population





# ***Client Stories***

## ***Aaron***<sup>6</sup>

Aaron is a national of Afghanistan who fled his country as he feared being killed by the Taliban for refusing to join them. He approached Justice Centre's legal team after his case had been refused on appeal and he was at risk of imminent removal. Aaron was distressed thinking he had no more legal options. Our legal team identified that Aaron could make a subsequent claim, because the country conditions in Afghanistan had changed significantly since his case was last heard. We supported Aaron through written submissions, requesting for his case to be re-opened. Aaron's request was accepted, and we are now working with him to put forward new available evidence and information about the risks to young men like Aaron posed by the Taliban who are the de facto authority in the country.

## ***Ian***

We were approached by Ian, an asylum seeker in Hong Kong who had found an alternative pathway to end his displacement through a visa application to the United States. However, like many asylum seekers who are required to overstay or illegally enter the city to claim asylum, Ian had a pending charge against him that was preventing his departure. His US visa was only valid for another few weeks. Justice Centre provided urgent legal support, working with Ian to navigate his options. We assisted Ian to liaise with the Immigration Department and consular authorities to find a solution. With Justice Centre's intervention the client successfully departed Hong Kong on the final day of his visa validity, and arrived in the United States where he was finally reunited with his family.

[6] This and other names within Client Stories are not the real names of the people we have supported





## TOWARDS IMPACT

# Welfare Advice & Psychosocial Support



- Displaced people achieve better legal outcomes
- Displaced people develop improved sense of agency and self-efficacy

Justice Centre's Welfare & Psychosocial Services are committed to addressing the welfare needs and enhancing the psychosocial well-being of people affected by trauma and destitution while they undergo legal processes and pursue solutions to their displacement. Through emergency interventions, multisectoral linkages, and therapy and group activities, we help people find safety and security in their current situation, and begin the path of **healing from past traumas**.

For substantiated refugees and torture claimants, we provide the support needed to connect with employers, obtain work permits, and open bank accounts, **empowering them** to provide for themselves and their families.

Through our **MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE** we connect individuals in need with our network of professional pro bono counsellors.

*"It has been a privilege to collaborate with the Justice Centre to recognise and address the mental health needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong. The community is one that suffers sustained injustices while embodying a collective strength and resilience that each of us can learn from. As the global refugee crisis continues to grow, access to mental health care remains an integral part of the conversation on what basic needs must be met by Hong Kong. Only when basic needs are met can we expect to empower, enrich, and contribute to a felt sense of safety, belonging, and wellbeing."*

**With our help, people were able to access:**

**14**

**Pathways beyond HK**

**38**

**Healthcare**

**4**

**Financial Agency (Bank Accounts)**

**29**

**Livelihoods & Permission to Work**

**8**

**Shelter and Housing**

**29**

**Psychological Therapy**

**46**

**Emergency Welfare Provisions**

**19**

**Education & No Objection to Study**

----- Dr Samara Melwani (DClinPsy)

# Client Stories

*"I have dreamed for this opportunity for 10 or more years, and thanks to **Justice Centre Hong Kong** that dream came true in 2023. Thank you for working with me in the process of applying to University for my education, and I don't think without your help I would have been able to do this."*

*--A Justice Centre client*



## Archer

Archer, a refugee and torture survivor from East Africa, had a strong motivation to pursue higher education but was uncertain where to begin. He wanted to be ready to support himself and his family and contribute to society, once his legal status was resolved. With our guidance, Archer was admitted with a full scholarship for an online Bachelor of Business Administration degree programme. We also worked with him to enroll in a certified personal trainer course, to pursue his other professional development goals. As we eagerly await Archer's graduation, we wish him every success on this transformative educational journey.

## Sally

Sally, a survivor of rape and sexual abuse from South Asia, sought our legal services in a state of distress. Responding to her need for medical and counselling support, we assisted Sally in navigating the public health system, and connected her with a pro bono doctor for continuous medical care. Additionally, our counselling services, facilitated by interpretation support, have helped Sally to start recovering from past trauma. Addressing her isolation, we encouraged her to join our Cooking for Wellness program, where she actively engages in classes, fostering connections with members of the community and contributing to her overall well-being.



TOWARDS IMPACT

# Training & Technical Assistance



- *Displaced people achieve better legal outcomes*
- *Practitioners working with displaced people deliver high-quality support*
- *Practitioners apply positive precedents & best practices*



We draw from our expertise in international best practices and Hong Kong asylum processes to train legal and medical professionals, providing resources and technical assistance so that they can deliver **effective and trauma-informed support** to people seeking protection in Hong Kong. Our trainings are CPD accredited and delivered by qualified lawyers.

We launched our newly revamped training on **Protection in Practice: Trauma Informed Lawyering** to upskill legal practitioners and others on how to deliver professional services in a trauma-informed way.

**23** lawyers attended our revamped **Trauma-Informed Lawyering training**:  
**100%** rated the course as "Excellent";  
**100%** agreed the training improved their understanding of trauma

**195** Learning sessions on asylum law delivered to over **195 lawyers** across **7 law firms**

**7** **medical professionals** trained on medico-legal reports to document torture and evidence non-refoulement claims

## Practitioners Library

We have created and launched the Immigration Detention Caselaw Database. The first of its kind in Hong Kong, it is an open

resource to assist lawyers and partners to effectively advise and represent refugees and torture survivors affected by immigration detention.



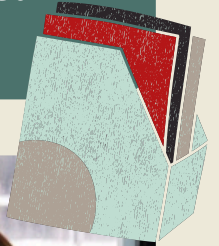


# TOWARDS IMPACT Strategic Casework



## Goals

- *Displaced people achieve better legal outcomes*
- *Practitioners apply positive precedents & best practices*
- *Laws, policies & practices generate people centred solutions based on evidence*



Through our direct services we identify and advance cases that can lead to positive jurisprudence and incorporation of best practices to improve the legal outcomes for people seeking protection. Our casework strategies centre around effective screening and preparation, recognising that it is often in the interests of all parties to avoid litigation.

Specifically, we prioritise:

- Using casework to improve **procedural practices** and quality of decision-making throughout all stages of proceedings.
- Building a pipeline of cases that ensure **robust evidence** and arguments are consistently put before decision-makers.
- Strategically reinforcing **positive jurisprudence** achieved in the High Court to ensure its implementation at the administrative level.

*In this year we have advanced work under these thematic areas:*

**Advancing access to legal protection for women fleeing sexual and gender-based violence**



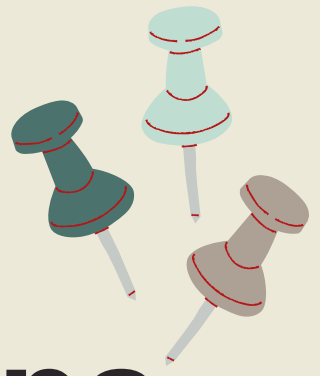
**Reinforcing the procedural and substantive rights of asylum-seeking children**

**Achieving redress for unlawful detention of torture survivors**



**Advancing systems and pathways for stateless people**





# TOWARDS IMPACT Research & recommendations



- *Displaced people develop improved sense of agency and self-efficacy*
- *Laws, policies and practices integrate the perspectives and needs of displaced people*

Research sits at the heart of Justice Centre's efforts to strengthen refugee protection and inclusion in Hong Kong across laws, public policies and practices, providing evidence for a fair and efficient asylum system. We spearhead and collaborate on original and high quality research that underpins **constructive recommendations and solutions** and integrates the perspectives of people with direct experience of displacement and related challenges.

## ***Participation***

Between June and September 2022, Justice Centre provided submissions to the Judiciary Administration on the draft Court (Remote Hearing) Bill to promote meaningful and equal access to justice for all in Hong Kong, and particularly those seeking asylum who interact with our courts.

We conducted an **extensive community consultation**, seeking direct input through surveys, and group briefings and discussions with refugees and asylum seekers. Some of the recommendations we put forward were addressed in the updates provided to the Legislative Council by the Judiciary Administration.



## ***Information***

Justice Centre publishes Fact Sheets to provide information on new policy developments and ensure those affected are the first to know. Over the last year, we published two Fact Sheets, on the Updated Removal Policy and Advance Passenger Information System, and conducted community and partner briefings.

# TOWARDS IMPACT Community Building



- *Displaced people develop improved sense of agency and self-efficacy*
- *Laws, policies and practices integrate the perspectives and needs of displaced people*



People seeking protection in Hong Kong have experienced displacement and disempowerment firsthand and are deeply aware of the issues facing their communities. However, they are often excluded from the conception, planning and delivery of services, strategies and solutions.

In 2023, Justice Centre's Aime Girimana—a lawyer, humanitarian worker, refugee and torture survivor— together with a core group of refugees and torture survivors in Hong Kong launched the **Humanity Seekers initiative**. While led by the Core Group, Justice Centre facilitates the initiative to break the cycle of disempowerment and dependency, promoting meaningful and positive interactions with local Hong Kong residents.

**Since inception  
Humanity Seekers have:**

## **Organised Monthly Townhalls**

*A monthly gathering for people with direct experience of displacement to come together to discuss and access information on laws, policies and services*

## **Set up a Community-Led Donation & Distribution service**

*to collect donations and distribute them to people in need*

## **Developed a Family Safe Zone**

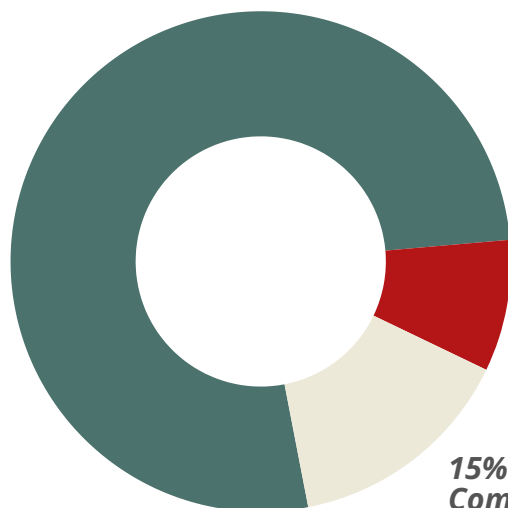
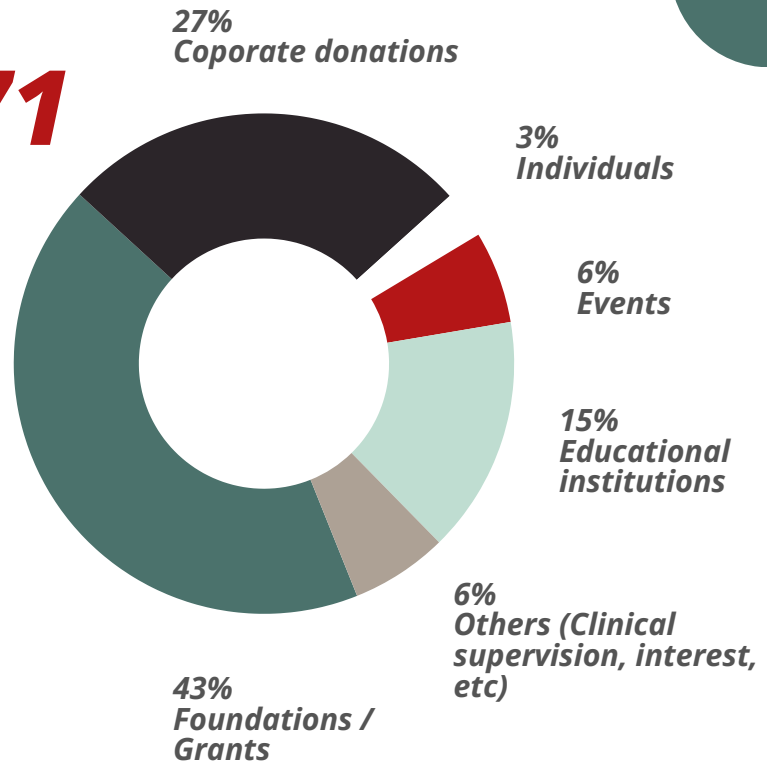
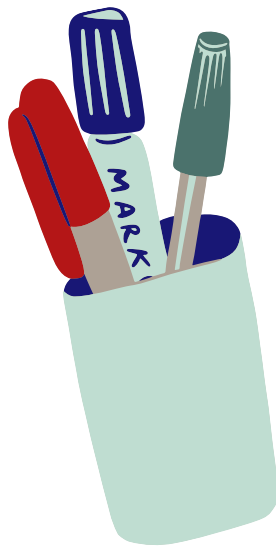
*so that there is a safe, open and welcoming space for families to meet and access activities and resources*



# Financial Overview

**Total Income**

**5,071,571**



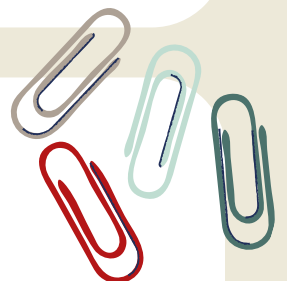
15%  
Communications  
and events

9%  
Administration  
and Management

76%  
Advocacy and  
Programmes

**Total Expenditure**

**6,037,751**



**Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic we are working hard to close funding gaps for our crucial services and programmes.**  
**Give generously to support our critical services.**

# Get Involved

We are powered by compassionate and generous people, who donate dollars, resources, time, skills and so much more to support our mission.

*If you are motivated to **translate compassion to action**, we would love to hear from you!*



## | **Donate your time:**

We work closely with **lawyers**, medical doctors, mental health practitioners, social workers and other professionals to offer holistic services.



## | **Share your audience:**

We deliver talks to **schools** and **corporates**, and at events to raise awareness of the issues we work on.



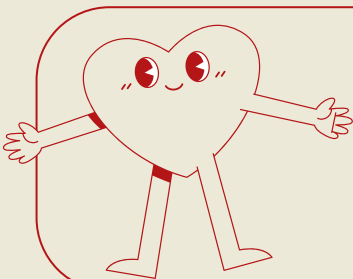
## | **Learn with us:**

We offer educational activities for **students** to learn about social justice and get hands on experience in community work.



## | **Partner for Impact:**

We work with **foundations** and in partnerships and networks to pilot, implement and scale up innovative and effective solutions.



## | **Fundraise for us:**

We heartily welcome individuals and groups who are interested in fundraising for us. From sporting competitions to dinner parties, we can help you get started and work with you to make your fundraiser a success.



**Donate your dollars:**  
**Every dollar counts.**  
**Thank you for your generosity!**



Contact us at [info@justicentre.org.hk](mailto:info@justicentre.org.hk) or find out more about how you can get involved here:  
<https://www.justicecentre.org.hk/get-involved/>

## ***Donors & Partners***

Thank you to our donors, partners and supporters for your ***generosity, trust and collaboration***. Achieving access to justice and social impact are joint endeavours, and we are grateful for our partners—long standing and new—for walking this road with us.

We extend our deep gratitude to our Law Firm Partners, and the teams of pro bono lawyers who have collectively dedicated thousands of hours to make sure that people fleeing conflict and violence are provided with the best legal help this city has to offer.

# Get In Touch



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