

# ASST

E-Newsletter Vol 1



## WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

july 2024

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I am delighted to welcome you to the first issue of the ASST newsletter. As the Chair of the Board, it is an honour to share with you the incredible progress and achievements our organization has made, thanks to the unwavering dedication of our staff, volunteers, and supporters like you.

This newsletter marks a new chapter in our journey to provide support, advocacy, and hope to asylum seekers and refugees. It will serve as a platform to highlight our collective efforts, share stories of resilience and success, and keep you informed about our ongoing projects and upcoming events.

At ASST, our mission is to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for those seeking safety and a new beginning in Aotearoa. Every day, we witness the strength and determination of our clients as they rebuild their lives. Your support plays a crucial role in making this possible, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

I would like to highlight the recent law reform regarding the detention of mass arrivals. This reform, unfortunately, has been accompanied by negative political and media discourses, creating an unwelcoming and stigmatizing environment for asylum seekers.

We are also concerned that while the government has moved quickly to reform the law on the detention of mass arrivals, it has not addressed the aspect of the law that involves the use of police cells and prisons for detaining asylum seekers who arrive individually. This oversight continues to affect the treatment and perception of individual asylum seekers.

We hope this newsletter will not only inform you but also inspire you to continue supporting our cause.

Together, we can make a significant difference in the lives of those who need it most.

Thank you for being a part of the ASST community. We look forward to sharing our journey with you and achieving even greater milestones together.

With gratitude,

Bernard Sama Ndy  
Board Chair  
Asylum Seeker Support Trust (ASST)

## Newsletter Highlights

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# Providing **Advocacy** Support for Asylum Seekers

Who we are

## Introducing ASST's Brand New Website

We are excited to announce the launch of the Asylum Seekers Support Trust's (ASST) new website! Our updated site offers an improved user experience, with enhanced navigation, detailed information on our services, and interactive forms for service requests, volunteer applications, and donations. Explore the new website at [asst.org.nz](http://asst.org.nz) to stay informed about our activities, access resources, and learn how ASST supports asylum seekers in New Zealand. We welcome your feedback through our contact page.

## Heartwarming Story from 'Warm for Winter' Campaign: The Power of Kindness



“Your Kindness Has Renewed Our Hope”: A Heartfelt Story from the 'Warm for Winter' Campaign

Thank you to all who have supported our Warm for Winter Appeal so far. We are humbled by your generosity in helping us provide warm winter goods to asylum seeker families. We have already begun distributing the heaters, blankets and children's pyjamas to families as we receive the donations. These have been much appreciated by the families who have received them, so a massive THANK YOU for the support in making this happen!

We have found that the need in this area is high, and we have many families yet to be allocated to donors. If you would like to support the Warm for Winter Appeal, please feel free to get in touch so we can arrange this.

We have found that the need in this area is high, and we have many families yet to be allocated to donors. If you would like to support the Warm for Winter Appeal,

please feel free to get in touch so we can arrange this. We are either able to give you a family code, with the details of needs (for example: family 35276 needs 2x blankets, 1x heater and size 4 and 5 kids pyjamas) or alternatively, are able to identify a single item that is needed, or again,

appreciatively accept monetary donations where we can purchase needed items on your behalf. If you are unable to contribute at this time, but would still like to support, please feel free to spread the word about this appeal, or alternatively contact for volunteering opportunities. Your support means everything, and together, we can make a real and lasting impact on the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in Aotearoa.

Thank you again, for supporting our organisation and our community of asylum seekers in Aotearoa.

**Christina**, the Client Service Manager, has been instrumental in championing and driving the Warm for winter project at ASST. Her dedication and leadership have been key in ensuring that this initiative meets its goals and provides much-needed support to those in need during the colder months.





## NEW VEHICLE DONATED BY HUGO CHARITABLE TRUST & FOUNDATION NORTH

june 2024

Each week, the Asylum Seekers Support Trust (ASST) distributes approximately 150 food boxes, providing essential nourishment to 500-600 individuals and families. Our old van was becoming costly to upkeep and unreliable, making it difficult to sustain our vital services.

We went to our donors, Hugo Charitable Trust and Foundation North, explaining this critical need for a reliable and efficient car. Both put their resources together and purchased a brand new KIA Carnival 2.2 EX Diesel for ASST worth \$50,000". This will go a long way and for many years in helping ASST move clients around to appointments and the delivery of food boxes.

On May 22nd, we received the vehicle from KIA Newmarket, with Mr. Raj handing over the keys. A big thank you to Luke from the Otago branch and Raj from the Newmarket KIA branch for facilitating the process smoothly.

## ASST GROWS IN STAFF TO MEET INCREASING DEMAND

The Asylum Seeker Support Trust (ASST) is pleased to announce the expansion of our dedicated team. We now have **8 full-time staff members**, 1 part-time staff member, and a driver working 10 hours a week. This growth reflects our ongoing commitment to providing comprehensive support to our community.

Our client numbers have reached an impressive **1,904**, demonstrating the increasing demand for our services. In response, our team has been working tirelessly, with last month alone seeing **1,700** activities and the delivery of **499** food parcels.

This expansion in staff allows us to better serve our clients and continue our mission of supporting asylum seekers and refugees with the utmost care and professionalism. We are grateful for the continued support of our community and partners, which makes this growth possible.

Asylum Seekers Support Trust is the only NGO that truly understands and empathizes with the experience of being a refugee. The support and care they provide brings tears to my eyes when I think about how my life would be a disaster if I hadn't found this organization.



Declare: Tschwacks Joseph

## A Message from the General Manager

Welcome to the inaugural issue of our ASST newsletter! I am thrilled to introduce this new way for us to connect and share the impactful work we are doing together. This newsletter is a testament to the unwavering support from our community, the dedication of our staff and volunteers, and the resilience of the asylum seekers we serve.

In each edition, we will bring you updates on our programs, success stories from our clients, insights from our team, and opportunities for you to get involved. Our aim is to foster a deeper connection and understanding between ASST and our valued supporters, ensuring you are informed and inspired by the difference we are making together.

In this edition, we shine a spotlight on the tireless efforts and invaluable contributions of our dedicated staff and volunteers at ASST.

From championing community projects like Warm for Winter to providing critical support services, their commitment continues to make a profound impact on the lives of those we serve. Join us in recognizing and celebrating their unwavering dedication and passion for creating positive change in our community.

As we continue to navigate the challenges and opportunities in our mission, your support remains vital. Whether you are a long-time supporter or new to our cause, we hope this newsletter becomes a source of inspiration and a reminder of the positive impact we can achieve collectively.

Thank you for being a part of the ASST family. Together, we are building a more inclusive and supportive community for all.

*Dawit Arshak*

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR BOARD CHAIR ON HIS PHD GRADUATION!

We are thrilled to announce that our esteemed Board Chair has successfully completed his Doctor of Philosophy in Law and Social Work at the University of Auckland. Employing the therapeutic jurisprudence perspective, Bernard investigated how the government's Refugee and Protection Status Determination can be more attuned to safeguarding the health and well-being of asylum seekers and the practitioners who work directly. He received the 2023 University Of Auckland Faculty Of Law Te Whaingā I Te Tika Award for advancing social justice and human rights for asylum seekers and refugees in his PhD research.

This significant achievement is a testament to his dedication, expertise, and passion for making a positive impact in our community. We are incredibly proud to have such a distinguished leader at the helm of ASST. We will be inviting you (date to be announced later) to join us for a special event where our Board Chair will share insights from his research and discuss its implications for our work. It will be a unique opportunity to hear first-hand about his inspiring journey as a former asylum seeker and the impact of his contributions to our community.



## MONTHLY RESIDENT DINNER RESUMES: A HEARTFELT REUNION

June 2024

After a long pause, our cherished monthly dinner for residents has resumed! Though the turnout was smaller, the evening was wonderful. Thanks to our generous sponsor, Pearls of Island, up to ten residents enjoy a sponsored dinner each month, fostering hope and community.

We gathered at Everybody Eats in Onehunga, where the warm atmosphere and special menu created a delightful experience. Laughter and conversations flowed as residents enjoyed the meal and each other's company.

A heartfelt toast expressed gratitude for the support from Pearls of Island and the resilience of our community, reminding us of our strength and unity. This beautiful gathering reinforced the importance of coming together, leaving us with full hearts and a renewed sense of hope.

## Testimony from a client



The Asylum Seekers Support Trust, who have been instrumental in helping us during our struggle:

When I arrived in New Zealand at 33 weeks pregnant with my husband, we were fortunate to learn about the Asylum Seekers Service Trust through acquaintances. From our very first day visiting, we met Vijitha, who instantly made us feel at ease with her kindness, helpfulness, and deep understanding of our needs. She is truly one of the most wonderful people we've ever met.

Christina has also been incredibly supportive, showing genuine care and proactively responding to our situation. Her assistance has been invaluable to us.



Another remarkable individual we've had the privilege to meet is Gina. Her generosity and understanding have made a significant impact on our lives. Gina went above and beyond to ensure our comfort in this new country, and during the intense moments of my labor, she provided unwavering support, which meant the world to us.

David deserves our heartfelt thanks as well for his support throughout this journey.

In summary, the Asylum Seekers Support Trust is a marvelous charity organization dedicated to helping individuals like us who have relocated to New Zealand from our home country. Their compassion and dedication have made a tremendous difference in our lives, and we are deeply grateful for their ongoing support.

**Residential Social Worker Gina**

## ASST GM DAWIT ARSHAK SPEAKS AT WORLD REFUGEE DAY EVENT

June 2024

Auckland, 20 June 2024 – Dawit Arshak, General Manager of ASST, attended the World Refugee Day event organized by the Waitakere Ethnic Board as a distinguished speaker. Drawing from his own experience of seeking asylum in 1984, Dawit highlighted the challenges asylum seekers face in New Zealand today.

### Key Highlights:

**Trials and Challenges:** Dawit shared the emotional and physical trials of seeking asylum.

"World Refugee Day is a call to action," Dawit stated.

"Asylum seekers need our support, not detention or deportation."

**Welcoming Spirit:** Dawit urged the community to embody New Zealand's motto "Haere Mai" by supporting asylum seekers.

### Join ASST in Advocacy:

Dawit called on the audience to stand in solidarity with asylum seekers, advocating for humane treatment and comprehensive support.



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