

E-Newsletter Vol 03



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER

I want to take a moment to reflect on our shared progress and the incredible work each of you contributes every day. At ASST, our strength lies in our people—Board Members, Volunteers, Staff, Community Organizations and Leaders, Funders/Donors, and Alliances. Your commitment and dedicated support continue to be the driving force behind our success and the foundation of our ongoing commitment to excellence.

As of now, we have a total of 2,755 clients, with 651 active clients engaged over the past 90 days alone. In just the last month, we recorded 1,962 individual activities—a testament to the scale and intensity of our work. The top five activities delivered were:

1. Food Distribution Programme
2. Women's Driver's Licence Programme
3. Immigration Support
4. Work and Income Issues
5. Check-in Calls or Visits

This incredible workload has been made possible by the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff and volunteers. Your passion and hard work continue to inspire hope and deliver meaningful outcomes for our communities.

However, we must also acknowledge the challenges we face. One of the most pressing issues remains the lack of action from IRD regarding the Working for Families Tax Credit entitlement for many of our clients in the workforce. These individuals—working across various professions—are facing unjust financial pressure, greater than that of other workers in New Zealand. Despite our continuous advocacy, this remains an ongoing concern that we are committed to addressing.

Regardless of the obstacles, your resilience and determination continue to shine. I want to sincerely thank each and every one of you for your continued dedication, energy, and passion. Let's keep the momentum going!

Stay safe and blessed

Dawit Arshak
General Manager
ASST

VOLUME 03

Newsletter Highlights

Message from GM

Women's Driver Licence Programme

Empowering New Beginnings

Guided by Matariki: Commemorating Refugee Day

Podcast Update: Beyond Borders Season 2 Launched

Introducing Beyond Borders: Voice of Asylum Seekers Podcast

Partner Appreciation: African Day Collaboration

Blog Spotlight: "Why?" Series Launched

Website Refresh

Workshop & Movie Night

Community Iftar Gathering

Follow us





EMPOWERING NEW BEGINNINGS

The Asylum Seekers Support Trust (ASST) continues to make a transformative difference in the lives of asylum seekers in New Zealand. In 2024, ASST provided critical support to 1,804 individuals, addressing essential needs such as housing, food, and clothing, while also offering guidance on visas, employment, and social welfare. With a trauma-informed, needs-based approach, ASST prioritised high-need clients, enabling them to rebuild their lives with dignity.

GUIDED BY MATARIKI: COMMEMORATING REFUGEE DAY

Our “New Beginnings” celebration brought together heartfelt welcomes, inspiring refugee stories of hope and belonging, shared kai that warmed every heart, and stirring performances that united us in song and dance. We wove together Matariki’s promise of new life with World Refugee Day’s tribute to courage and community. A deep thank-you to our speakers, musicians, volunteers, and partners —Welcoming Communities, Asylum Seekers Support Trust, NZ Ethnic Women’s Trust, Noor Foundation, New Windsor Community Hub, ETU Whānau, HOPE, P.A.B.E., Glenavon School, Whau Local Board, and everyone who joined us.

Testimonial

Dear Asylum Seekers Support Trust Team:

I hope this letter finds you in excellent health and high spirits. I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for the invaluable support and assistance I have received from your organisation since arriving in New Zealand on November 26, 2023, and applying for asylum.

Firstly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for the thorough education provided on the asylum seeker process. Understanding the steps involved and the requirements has been crucial for me in navigating this complex situation, and your guidance has been indispensable.

Additionally, the legal support has been incredibly reassuring. The clarity and assistance provided have greatly alleviated the stress associated with my legal circumstances and I am immensely grateful for this aid.

The educational support for my children has been a beacon of hope for our family.

WOMEN’S DRIVER LICENCE PROGRAMME

We are proud to share that ASST runs the Women’s Driver Licence Programme, making a meaningful impact in empowering women within our community. This programme supports 54 women in gaining the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to obtain their New Zealand driver licence—opening doors to greater independence, employment opportunities, and full participation in society. The programme includes booking for theory lessons, practical driving lessons, and for the driving test. We thank Foundation North who funded the program to the success of this important initiative.



We deeply appreciate your help in facilitating my children's continued education during this turbulent time. Moreover, the moral support I have received has been a source of enormous comfort. Knowing that there are compassionate individuals who genuinely care about our wellbeing has given us strength and hope during these challenging times.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude for the food pack support. Your generosity has ensured that we have had access to nutritious food, which is a fundamental necessity.

I would also like to thank Mr. Dawit, Ms. Christina, Ms. Vijitha, and Ms. May by name. Your dedication, kindness and unwavering support have made a significant difference in our lives and we are eternally grateful for your help.

Thank you once again for everything you have done for us. Your support has been a lifeline, and we will always remember your kindness.



Season 02 Premiere! Beyond Borders: Voice of Asylum Seekers

We're delighted to announce that our podcast "Beyond Borders: Voice of Asylum Seekers" has returned for a second season, which premiered in June. Season 1 was a tremendous success, garnering over 10,000 listens and more than 200 hours of total listening time—thank you for your support!

Podcast Update: Beyond Borders Season 2 Launched



Sue Elliot on Co-Founding & Supporting Asylum Seekers Support trust in New Zealand



In Season 2's opening episode, we sit down with Sue Elliot, one of ASST's founding members, as she reflects on her personal journey, the challenges she faced when the Trust was first established, and the courage that has driven our work ever since. Sue's story offers both inspiration and valuable insight into the early days of ASST and the resilience of those we serve.

You can catch all episodes of Season 1 and Season 2 here: <https://asst.org.nz/podcasts/>

Please share with your networks and help us continue to amplify these vital voices.

TUNE IN NOW

Asylum Seekers Support Trust

BEYOND BORDER

VOICE OF ASYLUM SEEKERS S02 EP - 01

How ASST was founded and the early days of supporting refugees in New Zealand

WATCH NOW **SUBSCRIBE NOW**

SUE **ASIF**

PARTNER APPRECIATION: AFRICAN DAY COLLABORATION

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Ketina Chivasa, CEO of Pan African Broadcasting Corporation, and Dean Kimpton, CEO of Auckland Transport, for organising the African Day event and inviting ASST to participate. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with such a vibrant, multicultural community within AT and to share our journey and services.

A special note of gratitude goes to Jebena Ethiopian Café and Restaurant for providing delicious cultural food that brought warmth and authenticity to the celebration.

We greatly enjoyed the insightful conversations and look forward to deepening our partnership as we work together to better serve our communities. Thank you once again for the warm welcome and meaningful engagement.



BLOG SPOTLIGHT: “WHY?” SERIES LAUNCHED

Our inaugural post, “Breathing in Words,” is now live on our website: <https://asst.org.nz/blog/>. In this deeply personal reflection, Mr Question contrasts the safety he observes in his new home with the invisibility he still feels, asking, “Why me?” as he recounts the harrowing journey from a loving family and peaceful life to displacement and uncertainty.

Each month, we’ll publish a new instalment in the “Why?” series—giving voice to asylum seekers’ stories of loss, resilience and hope. We invite you to read, reflect and join the conversation by sharing your thoughts or questions in the comments. Stay tuned for next month’s post, where we’ll explore another courageous story and ask: Why not us?

Testimony from a client

I left my country, Syria, in 2012 because of the revolution and the war. The situation became unbearable, and I had no choice but to flee. I moved to Turkey, but life there was not easy. In Turkey, everything was difficult—a new language, a different culture, and a new community. As a refugee, I struggled to adjust to my new life. It was hard to find my place. I faced constant anxiety, panic attacks, and depression. I was overwhelmed by negative thoughts. I also had deep concerns about my family, wondering if they were safe. During that time, there was no way to communicate with them from Syria. The silence was unbearable.

My mind was full of worries—about my future, my destiny, and my family. The pressure felt overwhelming. I constantly felt depressed and stressed, with a heavy load on my mind. On top of that, the situation for Syrians in Turkey was very difficult. The daily news from Syria was heartbreaking—violent, tragic, and filled with horror.

I tried to find work to support myself, but it was incredibly difficult. As a foreigner and a refugee, opportunities were scarce. I felt frustrated and devastated, often questioning how I would survive. I spent nearly ten years in Turkey, enduring these hardships and struggles. The events of those years felt like an endless tragedy. Eventually, I came to New Zealand, hoping for a better future. Now, I face similar challenges as a refugee. However,

the community here is more welcoming, and the opportunities are greater. Yet, despite the better circumstances, I find myself struggling with something else—I’ve lost my confidence and my belief in my own ability to build a new life.

I am trying to adjust to my new life, but the memories of my past are difficult to let go of. I don’t want to dwell on the pain I experienced, but I know that I must move forward. I hope to rebuild my life here, with the support of the government and the Kiwi community.

I am determined to overcome the challenges, regain my confidence, and find hope for the future. I believe that with time and support, I can create a new life.



WEBSITE REFRESH

We're excited to unveil our refreshed ASST website! The new homepage features a clean, user-friendly design, with intuitive menus and clear signposts so you can quickly find the support and resources you need. Whether you're seeking housing assistance, volunteer opportunities or the latest news, our streamlined navigation makes every section of the site easy to explore. Check it out at <https://asst.org.nz> and let us know what you think!

Workshops & Movie Event

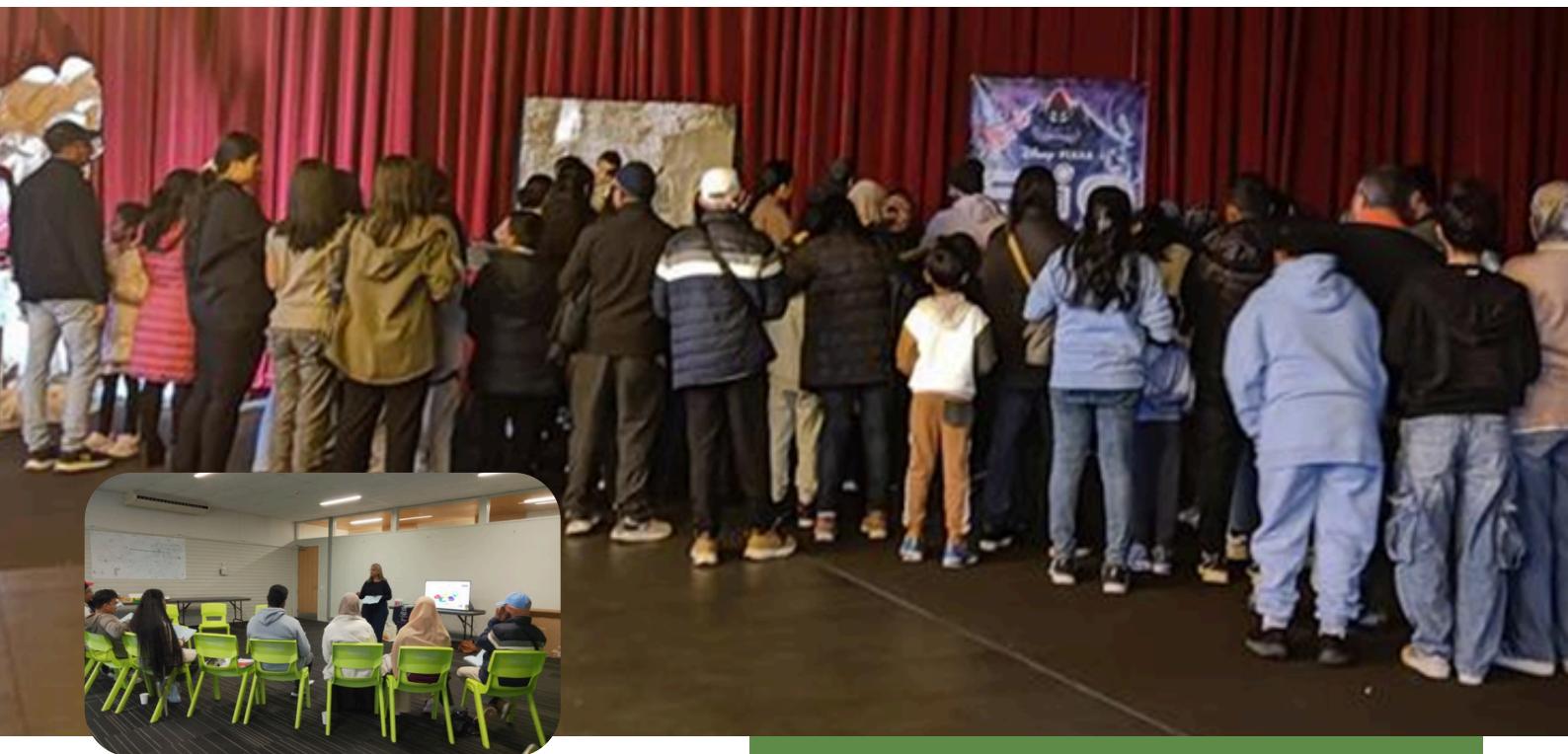
WOMEN'S WELL-BEING

Spoke about women's health including preventative health care processes, presentation on self-care and overall well-being.



EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP

Employers' rights; Minimum wage; Sick leave and annual leave; Workplace safety; Laws against workplace discrimination; Employee responsibilities and rights; Migrant exploitation; How to write a CV; The importance of cover letters and how to write them; How to job search.



When the workshop finished the clients all Thanked me and they say that these workshops are very useful because they are learning a lot of new things about New Zealand, which motivates me to do more. I sent the invitations out to clients through salesforces and through whatsapp ASST family events and ASST women groups. And the response I get is that the clients are excited to attend.

ASST Staff

“

Financial & Household Budgeting Workshop

Our Financial and Household Budgeting Workshop brought together asylum seeker families to learn essential skills for managing life in Aotearoa. Fiona from West Auckland Budgeting Services led a practical session on budgeting, savings, and handling debt, while Jessica from Utilities Disputes explained how electricity, gas, and water systems work in New Zealand. Participants learnt how to read bills, compare retailers safely, understand open vs fixed-term contracts, and what to do when facing arrears or disconnection.

The clients who attended reported that they gained valuable knowledge and felt more confident navigating everyday costs. The session also generated new ideas for future workshops, including learning how to write professional emails. Staff will now begin planning a yearly workshop calendar to continue supporting our community with meaningful, practical learning opportunities.

Movie Event – Lilo & Stitch Trip

During the July school holidays, ASST hosted a special movie trip for asylum seeker families to see Lilo & Stitch at Reading Cinemas. With 64 attendees, many of whom had never been to a cinema before, this outing offered a rare and joyful experience. Children received tickets and popcorn, and staff guided families through the process to ensure everyone felt comfortable and included.

The event successfully created a sense of belonging, giving children a story to share with classmates after the holidays and helping families connect with one another. The overwhelming positive feedback from attendees highlights the importance of these community-building activities. ASST will continue planning more holiday events—balancing free and budget-dependent activities—to support new families settling into life in Aotearoa.

CLIENT FEEDBACK

I just wanted to sincerely thank you for inviting me and my family to the movie event. We truly enjoyed watching the film together — it was a wonderful experience, and we're really grateful for the opportunity

“



COMMUNITYIFTARGATHERING

During the fasting month, ASST hosted a special Iftar with our fellow asylum seekers—coming together to break fast, share conversation and strengthen community bonds. It was a heartwarming evening of unity, reflection and support, reminding us all of the power of coming together in faith and friendship.

WEEKLY FOOD BOX DISTRIBUTION

This week, ASST—proudly supported by FairFood NZ and KiwiHarvest, and made possible by our wonderful staff and volunteers—distributed 130 vibrant, nutritious food boxes to asylum-seeker families in need, feeding approximately 500–600 people every Tuesday and Friday.

We're deeply grateful to FairFood NZ and KiwiHarvest for their generous support. Your donations enable us to sustain this vital service—bringing nourishment, comfort and community connection to households across Auckland. If you'd like to help us reach even more families, please consider making a contribution at <https://asst.org.nz/donate>.

COMPUTER LITERACY & SAFETY WORKSHOP

Our recent Computer Literacy & Safety workshop brought together 40 asylum seekers eager to strengthen their digital skills.

This was our first time running a computer-focused session, designed to empower both adults and children in using devices safely and confidently. Parents learned practical ways to monitor children's online activities and keep them safe, while children gained awareness about responsible internet use.

The importance of this work was highlighted when one participant shared that he had nearly been scammed online just last week.

Thanks to the positive feedback, we will be running several more workshops before the end of the year, helping more families stay safe and thrive in the digital world.



CONTACT US



Phone:
[024456884](tel:024456884)



Email:
info@asst.org.nz



Website:
www.asst.org.nz



Address:
875 New North Road Mount Albert, Auckland 1025