



## Crisis Response & Serving Afghan Refugees

**During the past several years,** we have seen an increase in the number of people seeking safety due to wars, conflicts, and disasters that have forced millions of individuals from their home countries. People seeking safety often leave everything behind to forge new paths and rebuild their lives. Many bring with them not just hopes for the future but also their education skills, and work experience.

*“The contributions and potential of Afghan newcomers are invaluable to the resilience of our communities and the strength of our local economies. They are the translators, fighter pilots, technicians that kept our men and women safe in Afghanistan. It’s a privilege to open our doors to them.”*

Most recently, the U.S. has seen an increase of refugees and asylum seekers from countries like Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Venezuela. Upwardly Global estimates that more than 10,000 Afghan professionals with college degrees and English proficiency have arrived since the summer of 2021 and the evacuation of Kabul. They have the **potential to contribute over \$640 million to the U.S. economy annually** if they are included in the workforce at their skill level.

A leader in workforce inclusion, Upwardly Global is uniquely positioned to address the needs of Afghan arrivals by providing access to industry-specific career coaching, reskilling and upskilling services, career navigation, and networking events that newcomers need to enter the U.S. workforce. We work to enable Afghan refugees to restart their lives and careers with opportunity, dignity, and hope. To date, we have helped place more than 525 Afghan refugees in thriving-wage jobs.

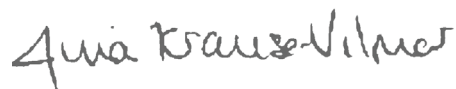
In response to the Afghan evacuation to the U.S. in 2021, we quickly mobilized and adapted our services to meet these newcomers on the ground at points of entry, offering

culturally competent and targeted resources to support their transitions into the U.S. workforce. It was a groundbreaking effort that changed lives directly and set precedent for how differentiated services can advance equity and inclusion in our economy and communities.

This May, Upwardly Global’s **Afghan response work** received honorable mentions in **Fast Company’s 2023 World Changing Ideas Awards** and **Ragan’s Crisis Communications Awards** in the Public Affairs category.

As Upwardly Global continues to welcome more refugees and asylees entering the U.S., we want to reflect on our impact and lessons learned from our Afghan response. As we mark the two-year anniversary of the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban, I hope you will join Upwardly Global as we celebrate the successes of this work and look ahead to the future.

Sincerely,



**Jina Krause-Vilmar**  
CEO and President

**Following the U.S. withdrawal** from Afghanistan in 2021, nearly 90,000 Afghans fled their homeland seeking safety, security, and opportunity in the U.S. Around 10,000 Afghan newcomers are estimated to have college degrees — with 28% possessing master’s degrees — as well as professional training and English language proficiency.

In 2021, as the situation in Afghanistan rapidly deteriorated, Upwardly Global launched an unprecedented effort to meet and support thousands of Afghan refugees and support their inclusion into the U.S. workforce with career coaching services and employer networking and training. We worked with leading businesses and tech companies, as well as media, government, refugee, and interfaith partners to document the professional backgrounds of thou-

sands of Afghans so they are matched with skill-aligned jobs that fill labor market gaps, and to shape the broader narrative around refugee resettlement.

Upwardly Global remains committed to supporting our Afghan neighbors and will continue lifting Afghan voices to transform hiring practices, policy, and public consciousness around refugee and immigrant welcome.

## CASE STUDY

# Rapid response and the Afghan portal

**In 2021**, Upwardly Global met newly arrived Afghan evacuees at “Safe Haven” military bases that served as their first stop in the U.S. Our staff on the ground at Fort Dix in New Jersey set-up a Career Readiness Center to offer evacuees in-person and virtual industry-specific webinars and job coaching. We expanded outreach efforts to Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia, Fort Bliss in Texas, Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, Fort Pickett in Virginia, Fort McCoy in Wisconsin, Camp Atterbury in Indiana, and the National Convention Center in Leesburg. Targeted outreach was also provided to evacuees who already left the bases, including at multiple Welcome Centers across the U.S.

In partnership with a number of resettlement and humanitarian organizations, philanthropic foundations, and government agencies, Upwardly Global was able to accomplish the following:

- ▶ Provided \$1 million of humanitarian support to address immediate short-term needs, bringing in 10,000 rolls of toilet paper and 25,000 hygiene kits, as well as coats, boots, shoes, and strollers to Fort Dix thanks to partnerships with [Accenture](#), [Bloomberg](#), [Afya Foundation](#), and the Jewish community in Westchester and NYC.
- ▶ Launched the Afghan rapid response portal with job readiness e-learning pathways for English-proficient

Afghans and upskilling and reskilling courses organized according to career pathway. The portal was accessed by over 4,500 users.

- ▶ Established Career Readiness Centers and career coaching programming at eight Safe Havens. We supported wifi access, supplied laptops, provided targeted career-training resources and individualized coaching, offered scholarships for certifications, and ran weekly job search sessions to support evacuees restarting their careers in the U.S.

Currently, Upwardly Global is creating partnerships with major companies to support the hiring of Afghan newcomers. We help companies navigate complex legal frameworks, understand how foreign credentials translate to the U.S. workplace, and establish culturally attuned hiring models.

Upwardly Global is leveraging know-how and Afghan newcomer stories with partners, from immigrant and refugee-serving groups to veterans’ organizations and even members of Congress, to bolster support for sensible, humane policies that help ease the path to secure permanent legal statuses for Afghans and other newcomers. These stories helped build bipartisan support for the [Bridging the Gap for New Americans Act](#), which passed last fall, and will play a role in decisions about the future status of Afghans and other refugees.



## BY THE NUMBERS

# Upwardly Global's Impact



**4,500+** Afghan evacuees utilized our Afghan-specific online learning platform, where they were able to access professional development certifications from Google and Coursera, reskilling opportunities, and other career-support resources.



**525+** Afghan professionals placed into well-paying, skill-aligned jobs through one-on-one career coaching, resume-building support, and access to our network of employers.



**\$59,000** average starting salary for our Afghan program alumni.



**250+** scholarships to Afghans pursuing additional certifications that bolster their employability in fields such as project management and cybersecurity.

## SPOTLIGHT



### Shahpur

was one of the first Black Hawk pilots for the U.S. military in Afghanistan, later serving as a captain and squadron commander. He also received a letter of commendation from the late Senator John McCain. After evacuating to the U.S., Shahpur worked with Upwardly Global to find work in his field and landed a job as a flight line technician in Arizona, performing aircraft-related services such as fueling and aircraft towing and transportation. As he adjusts to life in the U.S., Shapur hopes to continue advancing his career. [Read more about Shahpur here.](#)

“When I came to U.S., I was searching for a job. A friend of mine, who helped me in the evacuation, he knew about Upwardly Global. He said that ‘lots of pilots connect with Upwardly Global and they help them to find a job where they’re flying now. Maybe that will happen to you too.’ I was very happy to hear that and really wanted to connect with Upwardly Global. Every person I met at Upwardly Global is very friendly, very helpful, very nice. I really appreciate them.”

## TAKE ACTION

# Congress must pass the Afghan Adjustment Act

Since 2021, the U.S. has welcomed tens of thousands of Afghans through a humanitarian parole program that granted them a two-year stay. However, despite successfully seeking refuge away from Taliban rule, these Afghan newcomers do not currently have a path to permanent residency. While the **Biden-Harris Administration has announced a re-parole process** for Afghan newcomers, this is just a temporary fix. The visa statuses of many newcomers will remain in jeopardy until permanent pathways to living and working in the U.S. are guaranteed.

To support our Afghan neighbors, the U.S. government must take swift action. The Afghan Adjustment Act (AAA) is a piece of bipartisan legislation whose passage would secure a permanent right to live and work for many Afghan

evacuees in the U.S. The AAA was first introduced to the House and Senate in August 2022 and did not pass. Just reintroduced this month, July 2023, with bipartisan support, Congress must act now to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act to protect the thousands of Afghan refugees seeking safety, security, and support as they restart their lives and careers in a new country.

Afghans have already made significant contributions to the U.S. economy and society. We must allow them to rebuild their lives through community, government, and private support. It is critical that we ensure their right to stay in the U.S. **Contact your representatives and urge them to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act, the surest route to safety and stability for Afghan newcomers.**



**Afghan Newcomers  
Bring Critical Value  
to the U.S. Economy  
and Society**

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**Abdullah Antepi &  
Rebecca Fishman:  
A year later, we  
must honor our  
commitments to our  
Afghan allies**

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**Sohaila** worked as an assistant professor of a major teaching hospital in Afghanistan as one of the very few women general surgeons. In 2021, Sohaila, her father, and her siblings were forced to flee the country. They left everything behind to try and rebuild their lives in the U.S. Sohaila and her family arrived at Fort Dix military camp where she joined an Upwardly Global orientation session for job seekers. Sohaila worked with an Upwardly Global job coach to get interviews for jobs at NewYork-Presbyterian, where she was hired as a Research Data Coordinator. She hopes to one day return to work as a surgeon. **Watch the video about Sohaila's journey here.**

“ If Upwardly Global was not there, I wouldn't have got this job. It's because of them. It means a lot because I think I will be able to support my family financially. ”

