



Elisah O'Mara Wignarajah
President & CEO

REFUGEES
WELCOME



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



CONTENTS

2021 was all about meeting the moment.

As we entered the year, the United States was still in the midst of a raging global pandemic, coupled with bitter political divisions and a near-embargo on immigration. And yet, we still had hope: hope that a vaccine would come soon, that refugee travel would resume, and that Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) would continue to grow into its potential as the domestic leader in the immigration and refugee resettlement space.

All of those things happened, alongside countless others that we couldn't have predicted—most notably, the massive increase in unaccompanied children at the United States' southern border and the fall of Afghanistan's government to the Taliban. Through each developing crisis, LIRS rose to the occasion in unprecedented ways, taking a leadership role on the national stage through innovative programming, strategic communications and mobilization, and fearless advocacy.

We were able to transform extraordinary challenges into opportunities to expand, improve, innovate, and create a system that enables immigrant and refugee families to thrive. But this critical work of welcome is not undertaken alone. We owe so much to our talented, mission-driven staff and affiliate network, the communities of faith and goodwill across the country that stepped up in incredible ways to welcome our new neighbors, our corporate and foundational partners, and the tens of thousands of donors, volunteers, and supporters who joined the LIRS family in 2021. Thank you.

In many ways, it feels as if our work is only just beginning. We look forward to sharing all we've accomplished in 2021 with you in the pages ahead—and working together to do even more in 2022.



Krish Vignarajah

KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH
President & CEO



Elizabeth B. Wagner

ELIZABETH WAGNER
Board President

BY THE NUMBERS

2021 AT A GLANCE

In many ways, 2021 was Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service's biggest year ever. Despite continued challenges to resettlement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we received the most extensive public support in our 82-year history.



\$24 MILLION+

raised in support of our
immigrant and refugee neighbors



50,000+

new
volunteers



2,514

individuals assisted
at the southern border



3,824

immigrant children reunited
with family in the U.S.



13,843

New Americans
resettled



12,352

media appearances championing
refugee and immigrant rights



CRISIS RESPONSE

LIRS EMBRACES AFGHAN REFUGEES

When political crisis in Afghanistan morphed into a humanitarian disaster, LIRS secured the safety of thousands of U.S. allies. Now, displaced Afghans are working for LIRS to resettle others.



← AUGUST 2021

*Afghans arrive at Washington
Dulles International Airport
following evacuation from Kabul.*



THE LIRS RESETTLEMENT NETWORK WELCOMED MORE THAN 10,951 AFGHANS IN 27 STATES.



For two decades, hundreds of thousands of Afghan allies served the U.S. mission in their home country as interpreters, translators, cultural advisors, drivers, NGO employees, human rights activists, and more. Because of their service to the U.S. mission, our allies and their families soon became the targets of anti-American violence by the Taliban. When the Biden Administration announced its intent to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the threat to the lives of our allies only increased.

Foreseeing a humanitarian crisis, LIRS began [pressing the White House in early spring to take action](#). We joined veterans' groups, human rights organizations, and resettlement agencies to form the Evacuate our Allies (EOA) coalition—a group dedicated to education and

advocacy on behalf of our Afghan neighbors—appealing to the U.S. government as a unified voice to protect and evacuate our allies.

Alongside our partners, we worked to educate the public about Special Immigrant Visas and the dangers facing those who had supported the U.S. and their families through [webinars](#), action alerts, letters to the administration, and a [rally outside the White House](#). We also mobilized the LIRS network to send 21,000 messages to the White House in support of Afghan allies.

Our advocacy worked. President Biden announced his intention to evacuate Special Immigrant Visa holders and their families through Operation Allies Refuge in July, and the first of our allies arrived in the United States on July 30.



Two weeks later, everything changed.

Kabul, Afghanistan’s capital, fell to the Taliban on August 15, immediately upending established evacuation and withdrawal plans. The United States was forced to act quickly and evacuated more than 120,000 people to safety over the next two weeks.

Within days, LIRS launched a new **Neighbors in Need: Afghan Allies** emergency fund, coupled with our [Sacred Silence prayer and reflection guide](#). Our resettlement network, long-dormant under COVID-19 restrictions, mobilized quickly to support and welcome more than 10,951 Afghans in 27 states, and LIRS [partnered with major corporations](#), including Airbnb, Uber, and Walmart Foundation, to meet the housing, transportation, and other critical needs of new arrivals.

The response of the public was incredible. The American people donated more than \$4 million to our Neighbors in Need: Afghan Allies fund. We received more than 47,000 volunteer applications and more than \$35,000 in Amazon donations. Tens of thousands of people sent messages to their representatives advocating for our Afghan neighbors, while thousands more shared prayers and messages of support. LIRS [filled entire warehouses](#) with new and gently used household items, allowing Afghan families to begin their new lives in the United States with the comforts of home and a sense of stability.

↑ **MAKING A HOME**

Thanks to generous donations from the community, newly arrived Afghans were able to “shop” for hygiene and household supplies upon arrival at our partner office, LSSNCA.



“No one is safe in Afghanistan.”

MOHAMMAD'S STORY

Like many Afghan evacuees, Mohammad* was forced to choose between staying in hiding with his family in Afghanistan or risking the chaos at the Kabul airport for a chance to provide them a better life. The impossible decision was further complicated by his work with the United States, which put him in grave danger of Taliban retaliation—and even death.

He, along with more than 80,000 Afghans and their families, was eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa, or SIV, a visa given to qualifying Afghan nationals who served the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. The SIV should have ensured his and his family's safety. Instead, due to astronomical processing delays and an insufficient U.S. evacuation plan, Mohammad felt he had no choice but to try to ensure his family's safe passage from within the United States.

**Name has been changed.*



At the same time, LIRS was once again leading the charge in support of concrete protections for Afghans in the United States and abroad. Our Programs and Advocacy teams played a key advisory role in the establishment of the Afghan Placement and Assistance Program (APA), a new program that provided refugee resettlement benefits to Afghans who arrived in the United States on parole.

In many ways, though, our work was just beginning.

AMERICAN PUBLIC RESPONSE

\$4 MILLION+
DONATED TO NEIGHBORS IN
NEED: AFGHAN ALLIES FUND

47,000+
NEW VOLUNTEER
APPLICATIONS



← DECEMBER 16, 2021

CEO Krish O'Mara Vignarajah cuts the ribbon to officially launch LIRS's new office at the Peace Lutheran Church in Alexandria, Virginia.

↓ A PERSONAL MISSION

100% of the staff at the LIRS Northern Virginia office are Afghan, many themselves recent arrivals.



NORTHERN VIRGINIA OFFICE

Supporting the resettlement of newly arrived Afghans, LIRS established a temporary office at Peace Lutheran Church in Alexandria, Virginia, to assist in the provision of services through the APA program and ensure newly arrived Afghans are welcomed, supported, and empowered in their new lives in the D.C. Metro area.

Our Northern Virginia office is special; 100% of staff are Afghan—many themselves recent arrivals. They have [spoken publicly](#) about the transformative power of welcoming fellow Afghans to the United States and sharing their own lived experience with new arrivals. [Basiri](#), for example, arrived in the United States only days before the fall of Kabul and now works as an APA case manager. Another staff member, [Zarmina](#), is an actress on the CBS sitcom *United States of Al* who

was moved to assist her fellow Afghans after the government fell under Taliban control. Several members of our staff, like [Nassir](#), are Special Immigrant Visa holders and served as translators and advisors to the United States in Afghanistan.

By the end of 2021, the Northern Virginia office served 668 individuals, all in the last two months of the year. The office worked to ensure all clients were provided with basic needs support and connected to essential services as they worked toward self-sufficiency.

LIRS was proud to lead the charge for our neighbors in need during one of the most significant humanitarian crises in recent history, and we continue to work to rebuild a system that can withstand both urgent needs and traditional resettlement. 🇺🇸



**CLIMATE DISASTER IS EXPECTED TO
BECOME ONE OF THE LARGEST DRIVERS OF
DISPLACEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY.**

THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Climate disasters forced 84 million people from their homes in 2021. LIRS is urgently working to develop protection pathways for the climate-displaced.



“Climate change is no longer a distant threat. It has emerged as destructive a force as war, violence, and persecution.”

KRISH O'MARA VIGNARAJAH, CEO, LIRS

Global carbon emissions continue to escalate the impacts of climate change and accelerate climate disasters—putting millions of people at risk of protracted or permanent international displacement.

Though not as commonly considered as war, persecution, and violence, climate disasters are expected to become one of the largest drivers of displacement in the 21st century. As LIRS President and CEO Krish O'Mara Vignarajah said during a panel discussion at the [National Immigrant Inclusion Conference \(NIIC\)](#), “the truth is this: both a war-torn country and one constantly under siege from climate-related disasters are uninhabitable.”

All across the world, the situation is dire. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates there are 20 million people internally displaced every year due to extreme climate disasters. A 2021 report by the World Bank predicts that by 2050 there will be 216 million people internally displaced due to climate change. Already, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that climate disasters displaced more people than conflicts in 2020.

LIRS has served the displaced for more than 80 years—and we believe [those displaced by the climate crisis should be no exception](#). Recognizing the lack of lasting protections provided for climate-displaced people under current and traditional U.S. legal constructs, LIRS released a report in July entitled [Climate Disaster and Protection Pathways for Migration](#). The report details the framework for creating and advocating for protection pathways for those displaced by climate disaster. The report release was accompanied by a webinar, [“JUST MOVEMENT: Creating Equitable Pathways for Migration in the Wake of Climate Disaster,”](#) featuring climate displacement thought leaders.

Simultaneously, LIRS released our [Climate Displacement & Faith resource](#), which outlines the spiritual case for mitigating climate disaster and welcoming the displaced, and its accompanying webinar, [“Climate Justice and Migration: A Faith Perspective.”](#)

We continue to work with a network of experts to explore and advocate for legislation that supports the climate-displaced while advancing mitigation strategies to protect and prevent further damage to our planet. 🌱

OFFERING CARE AT THE SOUTHERN BORDER

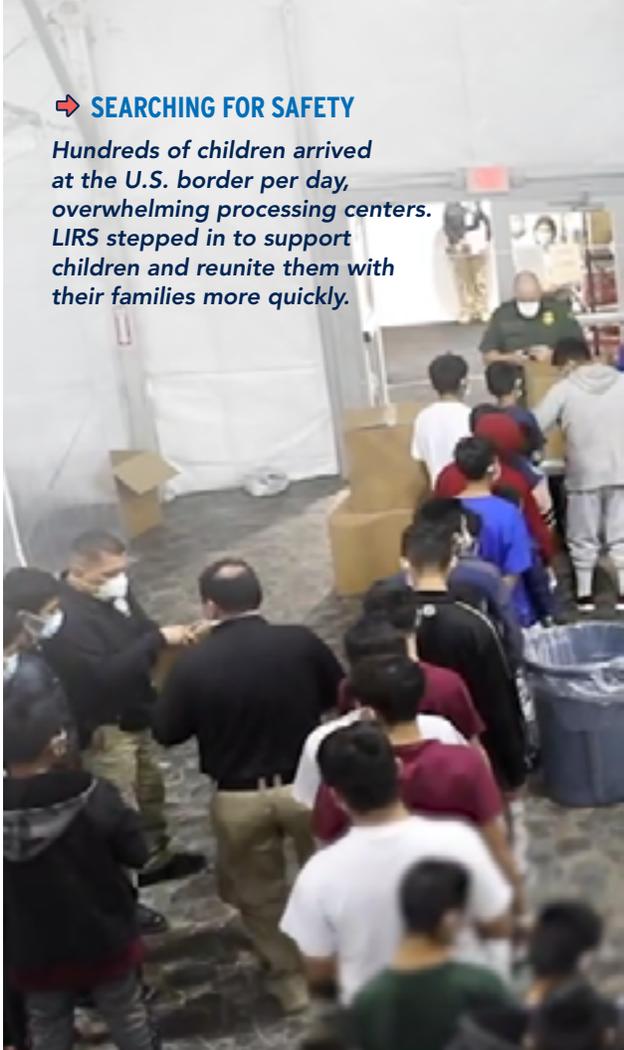
When record-breaking numbers of unaccompanied immigrant children arrived at the southern border, LIRS stepped up to ensure their safety was top priority.

In 2021, nearly 125,000 unaccompanied immigrant children arrived at our southern border seeking protection from the violence, climate disaster, and extreme poverty that have ravaged Central America and beyond. Compounded by the pandemic, this was by far the largest arriving



➔ SEARCHING FOR SAFETY

Hundreds of children arrived at the U.S. border per day, overwhelming processing centers. LIRS stepped in to support children and reunite them with their families more quickly.

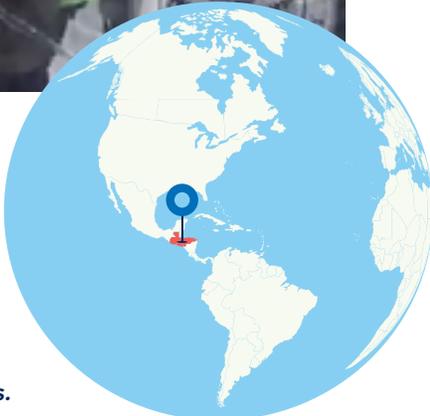


population in history, shattering previous records and straining the Office of Refugee Resettlement, LIRS’s government partner for foster care and family unification services.

At the time of their arrival, the United States did not permit immigrants to enter the U.S. through the southern border, but an exception was made for children. This resulted in hundreds of unaccompanied minors arriving in the U.S. per day and thousands being held in Customs and Border Protection custody and influx facilities—which were never designed to provide sustained care for children.

⬅ REUNITING WITH LOVED ONES

The vast majority of children who arrive at the southern border unaccompanied have a family member or guardian in the United States. LIRS works to reunite families as quickly as possible.



Our [Children and Family Services \(CFS\) team](#)

acted quickly, significantly expanding capacity through the emergency addition of nearly 200 transitional foster care beds, rapid growth of our Safe Release network from 33 to 55 sites, and the creation of a national call center to streamline and accelerate family reunification. (More than 80% of unaccompanied children have a family member in the United States.)

The LIRS model recognizes that these children are not just in our custody, but in our care. To support education and advocacy, we held a [rapid response webinar](#) and launched "[Hope at the Southern Border](#)," a toolkit offering ways to support the vulnerable children and families fleeing violence and persecution through action, donation, advocacy, prayer,

➔ **THE NORTHERN TRIANGLE**

A vast majority of the children at the U.S. southern border are teenagers aged 15 to 17 and come from the Northern Triangle—El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

and education—which was downloaded nearly 4,000 times.

The crisis proved what we had already known: unaccompanied immigrant children need more support than ever. That’s why we continue to expand our programming and urgently work with our service partners, community groups, and volunteers to address the critical needs of recently arrived children and, when possible, quickly reunite them their families in the United States. 🇺🇸

↓ **NEW BEGINNINGS IN NORTH DAKOTA**

A family of six from Syria is among the many refugees who began their new lives in Fargo, ND with the help of LIRS's new field office.



A LEGACY OF WELCOME

For more than 80 years, LIRS has provided a full slate of services to support and empower refugee and immigrant children and families—from respite services at the border to family reunification to setting up homes for New American families. This work is a mainstay of our mission and vision, creating the foundation from which we can build a better system.



MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

LIRS has served as a compassionate leader in services for unaccompanied immigrant children for decades. Our foster care, mental health, and family reunification programs emphasize safe, family-centric, trauma-informed care.

Following 2021's record-breaking arrival of unaccompanied children, LIRS committed to expanding our capacity to serve immigrant children in need while strengthening our time-tested programs and services. Through expanded [Long-Term and Transitional Foster Care Services](#), nearly 2,000 children were placed with loving foster parents, where they received personally tailored, holistic care—ensuring they have the opportunity to thrive in their new homes and communities.

To meet unprecedented need in our family reunification-focused Safe Release Support and Home Studies/Post-Release Support Programming, LIRS added 17 new Safe Release sites to its network in 2021, expanding our capacity to securely unite children and families by 70%. This community-based expansion targeted rural areas to support, educate, and empower caregivers facing challenges with transportation, who previously had to travel for hours to reach assistance. The Safe Release network now includes 52 locations around the country.

SPECIALIZED SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

LIRS recognizes that traditional services are not always sufficient for the children and families we support—and that extraordinary circumstances require specialized treatment. Launched in 2021, our new **Therapeutic Foster Care Services** provide children with special needs a family-like setting with access to specialized on-site case management and mental and physical healthcare. On the Family Reunification side, our donor-supported Unmet Needs Fund provided a prosthetic foot for a young man injured on his journey to the U.S., a seven-year-old girl with hearing aids and auditory therapy, and families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with rental assistance, orthodontic care, food, clothing, and diapers. ■





“We did it, son!”

JUAN'S STORY

“Juan* is a 17-year-old boy from Guatemala who was part of LIRS’s Transitional Foster Care program and was being reunified with his father in the United States. When we arrived at the terminal where he was meeting his family, he wouldn’t take his eyes off the door. Suddenly, I heard him cry, “Apa!”

His dad saw him, ran through the doors, and threw his fists up in celebration as if he had just won a championship. They ran in for a hug and just cried and cried. After Juan’s father and I finished going over the documents, he pulled his son in for another hug, fighting back tears, and said, ‘Lo hicimos, hijo!’ (We did it, son!) We said our goodbyes, I congratulated them, and they walked away with Juan’s dad wrapping his arm around his son’s shoulders.”

- LIRS Network Staffer

**Name has been changed.*



18,352

CAREGIVERS SERVED BY SAFE
RELEASE SUPPORT PROGRAM

3,824

CHILDREN SERVED BY HOME STUDY AND
POST-RELEASE SERVICES PROGRAM

1,861 CHILDREN SERVED BY LIRS IN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM IN 2021

Long Term Foster
Care (LTFC)

125 children

Therapeutic
Services (TS)

43 children

Transitional
Foster Care

822 children

Unaccompanied
Refugee Minor (URM)

871 children



OFFERING ASYLUM SEEKERS A SAFE PLACE TO LAND

Through respite and welcome services, LIRS provides a warm welcome for those seeking asylum at our southern border.

 **STEP SITES**

Seattle, WA; Las Cruces, NM;
Phoenix, AZ; New York, NY

 **PREP SITES**

Denver, CO; Lumpkin, GA;
Phoenix, AZ; Chicago, IL

A year after the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, the effects were still being felt by asylum seekers at the southern border prevented from entering the United States through an obscure public health order called Title 42.

Despite the order, the LIRS affiliate network provided respite services to 2,514 individuals and case management support to 253 individuals through our PREP and STEP programs.

STEP

The Stable Transition and Empowerment Program (STEP) provided intensive case management services to migrants seeking asylum and immigrant families exiting detention, empowering them to achieve greater stability and well-being in their new communities.

PREP

LIRS's Post-Release and Empowerment Program (PREP) provided emergency support such as meals, medical care, and access to phones to migrants immediately after their release from immigration detention. The program ensured a dignified and secure transition for individuals as they moved into their final destinations across the U.S. 🇺🇸



“Welcome, you are a walking miracle.”

ON-THE-GROUND IMPACT

“Two volunteers and I met and approached a Central American man sitting alone at the bus station. We offered him our usual backpack prepared with snacks, water, toiletries/hygiene products, and referrals to local organizations in his final destination. He suddenly became overpowered with emotion and broke down crying. He explained that he and others were stranded in the desert for over two days, and that he was begging God for water. Our act of offering him something as basic as a bottle of water was monumental to a person who—less than a week ago—was barely surviving. Of course, he was able to drink some water in the days he was detained by ICE, but no one *offered* him water. In his own description, the water we offered was spiritual; he was overwhelmed that unexpected strangers would help. Every time, I say to those we greet, ‘Welcome, you are a walking miracle. These volunteers and I are here because you are our hero. We see you and know that you did what you had to do in order to survive.’ Who else is telling asylum seekers that they are welcomed, supported, valued, and loved?”

– LIRS Network Staff Member



↓ RESTORING WELCOME

Kul Basnet, an LIRS North Dakota staff member, hauls a mattress into an apartment for a soon-to-arrive refugee family.



SUPPORTING REFUGEES IN THEIR NEW LIVES

LIRS stands with refugees every step of the way, from their arrival at the airport to their first apartment and beyond.





IN 2021, LIRS OPENED ITS FIRST REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT FIELD OFFICE IN FARGO-MOORHEAD, NORTH DAKOTA.



↑ TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN IN 2021

The largest majority of our newly arrived neighbors came from these five countries: Afghanistan (1,278), Democratic Republic of Congo (453), Syria (275), Ukraine (233), Burma (167), and Sudan (130).

Even before tens of thousands of Afghans arrived in the United States, our [Refugee Services team](#) was hard at work rebuilding LIRS's capacity for resettlement. In 2021 alone, we opened 21 new sites in 17 states—critical progress after the decimation of our network by the previous presidential administration.

While COVID-19 continued to impact arrivals, making the nationwide 125,000 refugee ceiling a nearly impossible goal, LIRS welcomed **2,892 refugees from 29 countries**. Among these were 43 individuals—including Sudanese, Congolese, Somali, South Sudanese, Iraqi and Syrian families—welcomed at our newly opened [field office in Fargo, North Dakota](#).

As with our Northern Virginia office, the majority of our 11 staff at the Fargo office are themselves immigrants or former refugees. Thanks to their leadership, by the end of 2021, all families they welcomed were in permanent housing, all school-aged children were enrolled in school, all adults were enrolled in English language class, and 90% of eligible individuals were employed, earning an average wage of \$16/hour plus benefits.

As we continue to rebuild, we remain inspired by successes large and small—serving as a partner, as one Syrian refugee shared, to help children and families “achieve their dreams.” 🌱



INNOVATIONS IN EMPOWERED LIVING

As one of the nine national resettlement agencies, LIRS has been serving refugees and immigrants through the United States Refugee Admissions Program since its inception. But we believe we can do so much more.

At LIRS, we believe that refugees and immigrants in the United States should not simply survive, but thrive. That's why we are moving toward a public-private partnership model that prioritizes the real needs of New Americans.

We call it the “empowered living experience”: a more holistic system that goes beyond the basics to offer a comprehensive resettlement and integration model, informed by refugee and immigrant voices and long-term evaluation.

NEW AMERICAN CITIES

When refugees arrive in the U.S., they receive a few months of basic services designed to help them acclimate to a new country, new culture, and often a new language. These traditional services are needed, but do not sufficiently equip

refugees to navigate the systemic challenges to long-term economic and social inclusion they will encounter in their new communities. Through New American Cities, LIRS creates inclusive communities that welcome and celebrate the potential of refugees and migrants by offering career navigation and upskilling while forging partnerships with business and civic leaders to support economic empowerment.

LIRS WELCOME CENTERS

In 2021, thousands of families embarked on long and dangerous journeys to seek protection in the U.S. because they had no other choice. Those that sought safety via asylum or humanitarian parole, however, faced a U.S. immigration system that was ill-equipped to help them.

LIRS Welcome Centers connect asylum seekers with the services and expertise they need and provides protection-centered and trauma-informed care. Services include referrals to mental and physical healthcare, legal services including know-your-rights support, and connection to community-based resources such as food banks and faith communities.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

LIRS Mental Health Services provide individual and family therapy to immigrants and refugees in Maryland, D.C., and Virginia. Our approach to treatment is trauma-informed, culturally competent, and evidence-based—mitigating challenges such as cost, accessibility, language barriers, and bias and resulting in holistic improvements in family stabilization, access to immigration legal protections, academic achievement, employment/economic stability, and improved physical health.



A NEW PATH

When this group of seven Burmese women entered the New American Pathways program—a precursor to New American Cities—they were interested in becoming phlebotomy technicians, but did not know how to access the required training and certifications. A Career Navigator with the program facilitated their enrollment in a phlebotomy technician training program through the Nywes Health Care Association. All seven women have since completed the training program and been matched with a mentor. They are now preparing for their national board exam to obtain industry-recognized credentials, after which they will be eligible for job placement.

A PROMISING LIRS PILOT OF THE NEW AMERICAN CITIES MODEL DEMONSTRATED A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND PARTICIPANT WAGES; ON AVERAGE, WAGES INCREASED FROM \$8.81 TO \$14.27 PER HOUR. ASSUMING FULL-TIME HOURS, THAT IS AN AVERAGE YEARLY INCREASE OF OVER \$10,000 PER PARTICIPANT.

CALLING FOR CHANGE

2021 served as an impressive example of the power of advocacy—from LIRS’s role in the evacuation and resettlement of our Afghan neighbors to Congressional testimony on behalf of unaccompanied children.



HOW LIRS ADVOCATES

8

ACTION ALERTS

246

MEETINGS WITH CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

30,000+

MESSAGES SENT FROM CONSTITUENTS TO CONGRESS



EVACUATE OUR ALLIES

When LIRS joined the Evacuate Our Allies coalition in April 2021, the then-small group—now up to 100+ members—employed an advocacy strategy involving direct engagement with the administration to request that they develop and implement a thoughtful plan for the evacuation of Special Immigrant Visa applicants. Despite the presentation of a model plan and well-reasoned pleas for the evacuation of our wartime allies, the administration appeared to ignore the warnings.

When it was clear that those efforts alone would not be sufficient, LIRS and partners engaged in a comprehensive and strategic advocacy campaign, activating over 21,000 constituents at the grassroots level and leading a public rally outside of the White House on July 1. Just two weeks after LIRS co-hosted the rally, the White House announced the launch of Operation Allies Refuge (OAR). In the months that followed, LIRS would continue to lead the charge through legislative advocacy (leading on three major bills and packages), two letters to the Biden Administration, interagency working groups, federal engagements, the facilitation of 215+ congressional meetings, and more.

LIRS’s record of leadership has inspired many to join us in our advocacy and to provide material support to welcome our new neighbors—during the Afghanistan crisis and beyond.

← JUNE 20, 2021

The theme for World Refugee Day 2021 was "Together, we can..." Supporters were invited to share their visions of welcome on social media.



MISSION-CRITICAL WORK

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

In 2021, our [World Refugee Day](#) Advocacy Virtual Fly-In featured a press conference with Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) and LIRS CEO Krish O'Mara Vignarajah. With 145 advocates from 27 states (and the District of Columbia) participating, LIRS's Advocacy team scheduled 67 legislative meetings for the congressional fly-in day. Advocates shared LIRS's legislative priorities, including increased refugee resettlement, the restoration of the asylum system, and safe refuge for Afghan allies.

↑ APRIL 2021

LIRS submitted written testimony to the Congressional hearing on "Unaccompanied Children at the Border: Stakeholder Perspectives on the Way Forward." LIRS's testimony delineated the qualitative and quantitative data demonstrating mounting evidence that the historic number of arrivals of unaccompanied children at the southern border was the result of a specious "public health order," Title 42—a Trump-era U.S. policy that LIRS advocated should be repealed.

↓ JULY 1, 2021

LIRS joined with our partners in the Evacuate Our Allies coalition to host the "Save Our Afghan Allies" rally outside of the White House.



PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

LIRS invites friends and supporters to engage with our flagship annual programs—or take the next step and become an LIRS Ambassador.

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

LIRS launched its sixth-annual Hope for the Holidays campaign, which collects cards and purchases gifts for children that are distributed at migrant detention centers across the country and at shelters along the border, reminding individuals and families that they are not forgotten during the holiday season. 2021 marked the first year that the program expanded to three partner hubs across the country and the first time the Hope for the Holidays toolkit was available in Spanish.



19,900

CARDS SENT

1,759

GIFTS DONATED

\$27,692

RAISED

GATHER

While Gather launched its second year with a focus on Democratic Republic of Congo, Gather: Afghanistan served as a critical resource for congregations and groups who were passionate about connecting with our newest Afghan neighbors after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban.

STAND UP, SPEAK UP

Stand Up, Speak Up offers members of the community an opportunity to stand up for welcome and speak up alongside our newest neighbors in a unified voice—culminating in an Interfaith Prayer Vigil.

LIRS AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Launched in fall 2021, the LIRS Ambassador Network is a community of passionate advocates, volunteers, and leaders from all walks of life, united by their commitment to stand in solidarity with LIRS and the newcomers we serve.

Since its inception, the Network has grown to **75 Ambassadors from 25 states**, representing clergy, veterans, federal employees, university students and faculty, legal professionals, and community organizers. LIRS Ambassadors are invited to take action through five impact roles: Advocates, Creators, Philanthropists, Representatives, and Conveners.



FAITH TRADITION

LIRS embraces the Lutheran legacy of welcome, which grounds and informs our work. The expansion of our Mobilization and Faith Relations team increased capacity to engage with Lutheran and other faith networks through prayer, reflection, and discernment. While the pandemic continued to limit in-person engagement, LIRS offered digital retreats for the seasons of [Lent](#) and [Advent](#), viewed more than 3,100 times.

2021 also saw the launch of [EMMAUS: Congregational Discernment](#), a program connecting congregations that want to support immigrant and refugee communities with opportunities for donation, volunteering, and co-sponsorship. The Discernment Guide was downloaded 191 times by congregations from 33 states representing 14 Christian and interfaith denominations.



MEET BILL, AN LIRS AMBASSADOR

Bill is a retired USAID Foreign Service Officer who joined the first cohort of the LIRS Ambassador Program. He has been working to support and empower refugees since 1988, from cosponsoring a Russian woman in an enterprise development program to assisting an Iraqi family in coming to the United States via the Special Immigrant Visa program and hosting them in his home. In 2021, he became an LIRS volunteer and helped manage donations for Afghan evacuees. Through LIRS, he was able to connect with Hameed, an Afghan man who had worked with USAID, State, and the U.S. Military before he and his family were evacuated to the U.S. and ended up in central California. Bill helped Hameed with his resume, and he successfully landed a professional job within just four months of arriving in the United States.

“My wife, Sandi, and I continue to be enriched by the dear friends we’ve made,” said Bill. “We’ve been blessed to experience their challenges and successes as they navigate their way through the cultural and economic challenges of becoming U.S. citizens. They have all become part of our family.”

Pictured: Bill celebrates a birthday with the Iraqi family he has supported and built a friendship with since 2012.



**MORE THAN 90% OF ALL REVENUE
GOES TO SUPPORT VITAL LIRS PROGRAMS.**

DEVELOPMENT AND DONOR SUPPORT

2021 was the most successful fundraising year in LIRS history, spurred by an outpouring of support after the Afghanistan crisis that increased the number of individual gifts given by nearly 300%—from just over 6,000 in FY20 to just under 23,000 in FY21.

Through the crisis and beyond, we connected with 32 corporate and foundational donors to raise nearly \$9.5 million—including \$4.47 million for our new Afghan neighbors. Notable partnerships included Airbnb, Walmart.org, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, and Uber.

In total, LIRS received \$24.6 million in private dollars in 2021. As always, we are inspired by the generosity of our donors and partners, whose gifts make a real difference in the lives of immigrants and refugees every single day.

“God has blessed us with a comfortable living, and we have enough money to share. It is hard to imagine being in their shoes, but I hope that if my family ever had to flee our homes, someone would open their homes and hearts to help us.”

NEOMA G., LIRS DONOR



⇒ **TREE OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Since 1955, the Tree of Life Lutheran Church in Yakima, Washington has faithfully served their multi-cultural community. Unfortunately, the harsh impacts of COVID-19 brought the congregation to the difficult decision to close its doors and distribute their final assets.

They chose LIRS to receive a generous donation to continue their long legacy of welcoming the stranger. Our heartfelt appreciation goes to the congregation for their generosity and service.



| 2021 DONATIONS | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| 32 CORPORATE AND FOUNDATIONAL DONORS | 23,000 INDIVIDUAL GIFTS | \$24.6 MILLION RECEIVED IN PRIVATE DOLLARS |



⇐ **COOKIE AND LEMONADE SALE**

“My son Peter is 12 years old and was extremely saddened by the events that unfolded in Afghanistan. He felt deeply for the refugees, especially children, seeking comfort and safety here in the United States and around the world. We heard about your organization after researching ways to help online. He put together a cookie and lemonade sale on Labor Day weekend. His stand was a huge success, and he is still looking for ways to help. We hope that as the refugees settle closer to our area, we will be able to do more and volunteer our time to your cause.”

2021 FINANCIAL REPORT

LIRS is a careful steward of the private donations and public funds that allow us to carry out our work of welcome.



Statement of Financial
Position as of
December 31, 2021

Dollars in thousands

**STATEMENT OF
FINANCIAL POSITION**

| ASSETS | 2021 | 2020 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Cash & Cash Equivalents | \$18,231 | \$20,902 |
| Investments | 14,923 | 266 |
| U.S. Govt Receivable | 29,235 | 7,055 |
| Other Assets | 4,178 | 2,830 |
| Investment In Lutheran Center Corp | 3,407 | 3,420 |
| Total Assets | \$69,974 | \$34,473 |

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES

| | 2021 | 2020 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Accounts Payable & Other Liabilities | \$31,005 | \$11,539 |
| Long-term Debt | 1,883 | 1,886 |
| Total Liabilities | \$32,888 | \$13,425 |

NET ASSETS

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Without Donor Restrictions | \$32,818 | \$20,512 |
| With Donor Restrictions | 4,268 | 536 |
| Total Net Assets | \$37,086 | \$21,048 |

| | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets | \$69,974 | \$34,473 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|

Statement of
Activities & Changes
in Net Assets for
the year ended
December 31, 2021

Dollars in thousands

**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
& CHANGES IN NET ASSETS**

| SUPPORT & REVENUE | 2021 | 2020 |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Contributions – Private Sources | \$23,170 | \$3,414 |
| U.S. Government and State | 93,189 | 57,857 |
| Fees and Other Revenue | 1,909 | 1,801 |
| Total Support and Revenue | \$118,268 | \$63,072 |

| EXPENSES | 2021 | 2020 |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Program Services | \$94,808 | \$56,541 |
| Management and General | 5,642 | 3,504 |
| Fundraising | 1,724 | 1,283 |
| Total Expenses | \$102,174 | \$61,328 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Change in Net Assets</i> | \$16,038 | \$1,744 |
| <i>Net Assets, Beginning of Year</i> | 21,048 | 19,304 |
| Net Assets, End of Year | \$37,086 | \$21,048 |

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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GEM

Reinhard Ziegler, PhD

The Vessel

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) welcomes newcomers who seek safety, support, and a share in the American dream. In collaboration with partners across the country, we run programs in two core areas: Children and Family Services and Refugee and Migrant Services.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

To help LIRS continue our work of welcome, please visit lirs.org/donate.

LIRS HEADQUARTERS

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