



Women's Economic Power Initiative

The Women's Economic Power (WEP) initiative addresses the urgent need to shift how we value immigrant women's contributions and address the systemic lack of investment to ensure that women equally thrive in the workforce.

More than 1/3 immigrant women in the U.S. hold a bachelor's or advanced degree.

Over 40% of Upwardly Global's women participants cited childcare as the leading cause of dropout.

For two decades, Upwardly Global has been at the forefront of advancing immigrant professionals as they navigate the complexities of the American workforce. Today, we acknowledge that women face gendered barriers that lock immigrant women out of opportunity because of limited access to affordable childcare, safe, quality jobs, and equal pay. No woman should have to choose between providing for her family and building a better future.


The WEP initiative is bold and ambitious. One key pillar is **expanding access to affordable childcare**. Childcare expenses are a major barrier for women to enter or remain in the workforce. We are advocating for policies that prioritize access to high-quality, affordable childcare that are inclusive of immigrant families. We believe

that by investing in childcare infrastructure, we can unlock the full potential of immigrant women.

We don't intend to stop there. We are also focused on **expanding access to credentials, peer-to-peer support, and dismantling the social and occupational barriers that hinder immigrant women from reaching their full potential.**

Through these efforts, we aim to create a more equitable and inclusive society where every woman has the opportunity to thrive.

With gratitude,



Jina Krause-Vilmar
CEO and President



“The challenges that I faced in Afghanistan highlighted to me the power of empowering women, how it transforms life ... if you are working, acquiring new skills, getting employment, and how it shapes your dignity in your own life, and in society and community.”

—Farzana, Business and Administration Professional from Afghanistan

Caretaker, cleaner, cook — these are just some of the unpaid roles women fill in their households, often layered on top of paid, full-time jobs in the workforce. In the U.S., women spend 37% more time on unpaid household and care work than men on average. With this unpaid labor comes an economic loss, not just for the women tasked with this additional household work, but also for the U.S. as a whole.

The undervaluation of women's contributions and absence of adequate childcare causes delays in women reentering the workforce, leading to productivity losses estimated at \$122 billion annually in the U.S. alone. Without access to affordable childcare and meaningful family support, women are asked to make significant career sacrifices, forgoing skill-aligned opportunities or leaving the workforce completely.

Upwardly Global's community of immigrant and forcibly displaced professionals faces multiple identity-related challenges, including color, migration, gender, and eco-

nommic status. For immigrant women, gendered systemic obstacles and societal norms introduce additional challenges that limit their ability to assume leadership roles, influence decision-making, and generate wealth.

To foster a more inclusive workforce and end the cycle of economic disadvantage for immigrant, and forcibly displaced women, Upwardly Global is scaling its work, adapting our programs, shifting narratives, and advocating for gender-inclusive policies to ensure more women job seekers can restart their careers and secure skill-aligned, thriving-wage jobs.



“When I found Upwardly Global during my search, I was like, ‘Oh, I don’t necessarily have to start at the bottom. [My mentor] broke down what kinds of salaries to look for, what kinds of companies to look for. I felt like I had a roadmap. I am so grateful to have landed a job in my field — a great salary, great perks [and] they’re family-oriented ... it’s been a pretty good balance with my daughter’s childcare and with my job.”

— Mandy, Health and Safety Specialist from Trinidad and Tobago

BY THE NUMBERS

Upwardly Global's Impact in 2023

2,000+

women job seekers

served through Upwardly Global's Career Coaching Program, partnerships, portals, and other online programs, with **51% identifying as forcibly displaced**

690+

women reskilled or upskilled

to gain industry-relevant skills, credentials, and certifications in technical fields that enhance their employability and workforce resiliency. Training areas include data science, project management, clinical research coordination, UX/UI design, cloud computing, IT support, and data analytics

\$60,500

average annual starting salary

of women job seekers who have completed Upwardly Global's Career Coaching Program and have been placed in skill-aligned, thriving-wage jobs, representing an average wage gain of \$51,700

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

Building Women's Economic Power

Launched in 2022, Upwardly Global's **Women's Economic Power initiative** aims to dismantle the systemic barriers faced by immigrant women to realize their economic power and have equitable access to employment opportunities. With economic power, women possess the skills, resources, and agency to succeed, shape their choices, and make economic decisions. They have fair access to the resources needed to assert full control over their lives, including income, healthcare, credit, and childcare.

To build economic power for immigrant women in our community, we must address the unique challenges they face, such as restricted access to affordable childcare, occupational segregation, rigid gender roles, and limited career services.

Upwardly Global is committed to creating sustainable pathways to economic power for immigrant, refugee, and asylee women job seekers rebuilding their lives in the U.S. by focusing on:

▶ **Workforce development:** Upwardly Global has a successful track record of building and uplifting the skills of immigrant women — many of whom are less likely to access professional roles. We provide gender-sensitive online and self-paced training programs, scholarships, networking events, and peer-to-peer support platforms to help build community and guide immigrant women through a successful job search journey into skill-aligned, thriving-wage careers.

▶ **Policy change:** Upwardly Global is on the front lines, advocating for policies and legislation that ensure women

aren't left behind. We know the immense impact childcare has on the participation of immigrant women in the U.S. workforce: In 2022, 43.5% of women job seekers left Upwardly Global's Career Coaching Program due to childcare challenges and the lack of a support system. We mobilize our networks to prioritize investments in affordable and accessible childcare to bolster the workforce participation, economic mobility, and social inclusion of immigrant, refugee, and asylee women.

▶ **Paradigm shift:** Upwardly Global is mobilizing coalitions, stakeholders, and national leaders to lift the economic power of immigrant women. We want to transform how we value and invest in women's contributions by building the essential infrastructure they require to thrive and shifting the narrative about the crucial roles they play in U.S. society and culture.

When we uplift immigrant women and unlock their potential to fully contribute and thrive, we ensure a diverse workforce, build resilient communities, and contribute to a robust U.S. economy.

SPOTLIGHT



Anh didn't know her degree in physics and electrical engineering would go unused for years. In 2017, Anh left her home country of Vietnam to join her husband in the U.S. Once in Texas, she encountered barriers to restarting her career in research and development and slipped into the role of stay-at-home mom, raising her two young daughters. Then, following a separation from her husband, Anh became the main provider of her family — finding employment and childcare was critical.

With Upwardly Global's support, Anh received guidance on career navigation, self-marketing, and building a professional network in the U.S. Her newfound confidence helped her ace interviews and learn about salary negotiation — all while making sure to advocate for her needs as a single mother. Now, Anh works as an Accountant with a salary of \$55,000. She hopes to one day reskill as a data analyst and earn an even higher salary for her daughters. [Read Anh's full story here.](#)

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

In January of 2024, Upwardly Global submitted policy recommendations to the **White House Task Force on New Americans** that specifically addressed the critical issue of childcare for immigrant women and families in the U.S. Building on the Biden administration’s 2023 “**Executive Order on Increasing Access to High-Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers**,” Upwardly Global proposed federal actions to address the additional barriers immigrant families face: administrative barriers, lack of culturally responsive childcare options, and mental health issues.

To meaningfully support the inclusion of professionals — especially immigrant women — in the U.S. workforce, Upwardly Global believes the U.S. government must invest in foundational childcare infrastructure that includes:

- ▶ **Expanding and clarifying** eligibility for childcare programs and subsidies, partnering with agencies and organizations across the national, state, and community levels — from the Department of Labor to local colleges and universities — to better share information about childcare and early-learning services with immigrant and refugee families.
- ▶ **Developing and implementing** curricula that reflect the diversity of immigrant families’ languages, cultures, and experiences to create inclusive and affirming learning environments for immigrant children.

- ▶ **Centering and uplifting** the experiences of immigrants, refugees, and asylees as working parents or caretakers through formal data collection and advisory opportunities or roundtable discussion and listening sessions.
- ▶ **Increasing access** to no-cost and low-cost mental health services and support that address the specific physical and emotional well-being needs of diverse immigrant communities across the U.S.

Upwardly Global’s recommendations are grounded in the belief that when everyone — including immigrant, refugee, and asylee women — can access the tools and resources they need to reach their full potential, we create shared prosperity, foster thriving communities, and promote economic growth.



50%
of U.S. families report difficulty finding childcare with mothers unable to find care being significantly less likely to be employed



\$122B
annual productivity loss due to infant-toddler childcare issues, with their impact on families, businesses, and taxpayers nearly doubling since 2018



Women’s Economic Power initiative site

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Watch this video: Intersections: Immigrant Women in the Workforce

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How To Advance Immigrant Women’s Access to Childcare: Policy Brief

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Watch Upwardly Global Public Board Meeting: Skills Based Hiring for Immigrants and Refugees: Special Focus on Supporting Women

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