



ASCEND - LEADERSHIP
THROUGH ATHLETICS

Impact Report

Jan 1-Dec 31, 2022

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our Founder



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A message from our founder

Ascend's work in 2022 laid the foundation for our growth to new programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2023, reaching thousands of people through our activities.

We spent 2022 honoring our commitment to support the 134 Afghans whom we helped to leave their country in 2021. Our priority was to help these girls build new lives legally, and with dignity. We created partnerships with generous people around the world to help them find community in 9 different countries, learn 7 new languages, and find pathways to education and jobs.

But we never stopped working to deliver our program to girls in Afghanistan, and to build towards a greater impact by launching in new places.

2022 tested Ascend's agility and left us more resolute than ever in our commitment to empowering girls. When women lead, societies experience greater stability, more lasting peace, healthier families and stronger economies. It begins with investing in girls.

We are so grateful to all who made that investment in 2022. My deepest thanks to the donors and volunteers who powered this incredible year.



2022: An extraordinary year

Our Mission

Ascend empowers girls and women through mountaineering based leadership training and community service.

The events of 2021 in Afghanistan demanded that we pause our normal programming and respond to new realities. Our mission is to help girls succeed in their communities, but when our girls asked for our help to leave Afghanistan and find a life where they could pursue an education and freedom, we stepped in to do whatever we could.

Our Pivot

2022 was about following through with that commitment, while strengthening our organization to make even greater impact with our programs in 2023.

To support the 134 Afghans we helped to leave their country, we invested in partnerships with community groups around the world; created “Ascend Online” to serve those in transit; and sought mental health resources to help girls cope.

Our friends and allies around the world helped us to empower girls at a vulnerable time in their lives. We are deeply grateful to all who supported this work.



2022 Priorities

1

Support the dignified and legal resettlement of 134 Afghans

Ascend supported the movement of 134 of our participants, alumnae, and staff members and their families in 2021. During 2022, we directed resources to provide language training, jobs placement, and pathways to education as they settled into new lives across 8 countries.

2

Launch Ascend's program in a new country

As our alumnae navigated the crisis of suddenly becoming refugees and asylum seekers, many told us the skills they learned in our program were key to their resilience. This feedback fed our fire to take our program to new places. We conducted a rigorous global study to select the next location in which to establish our program. Ascend Pakistan launched in December 2022.

3

Establish a vibrant alumnae program

One of the many barriers holding women back from leadership roles is a lack of female networks. A vibrant alumnae program provides an inner circle of teammates who share the experience of being an Ascend team member. Through the Ascend Alumnae Association, our girls obtain support to engage in climbing, hiking, and camping that reinforces bonds and provides a helping hand to reconnect with the activities they first experienced in our program.

4

Assess feasibility of resuming programming in Afghanistan

Our commitment to empowering girls in Afghanistan remained unchanged as the country experienced a dramatic change in laws and the rights of women and girls. We watched events closely and held on to our assets with the intention of resuming our program if it was feasible in 2023. Alumnae assisted with a needs assessment to help inform the program design.

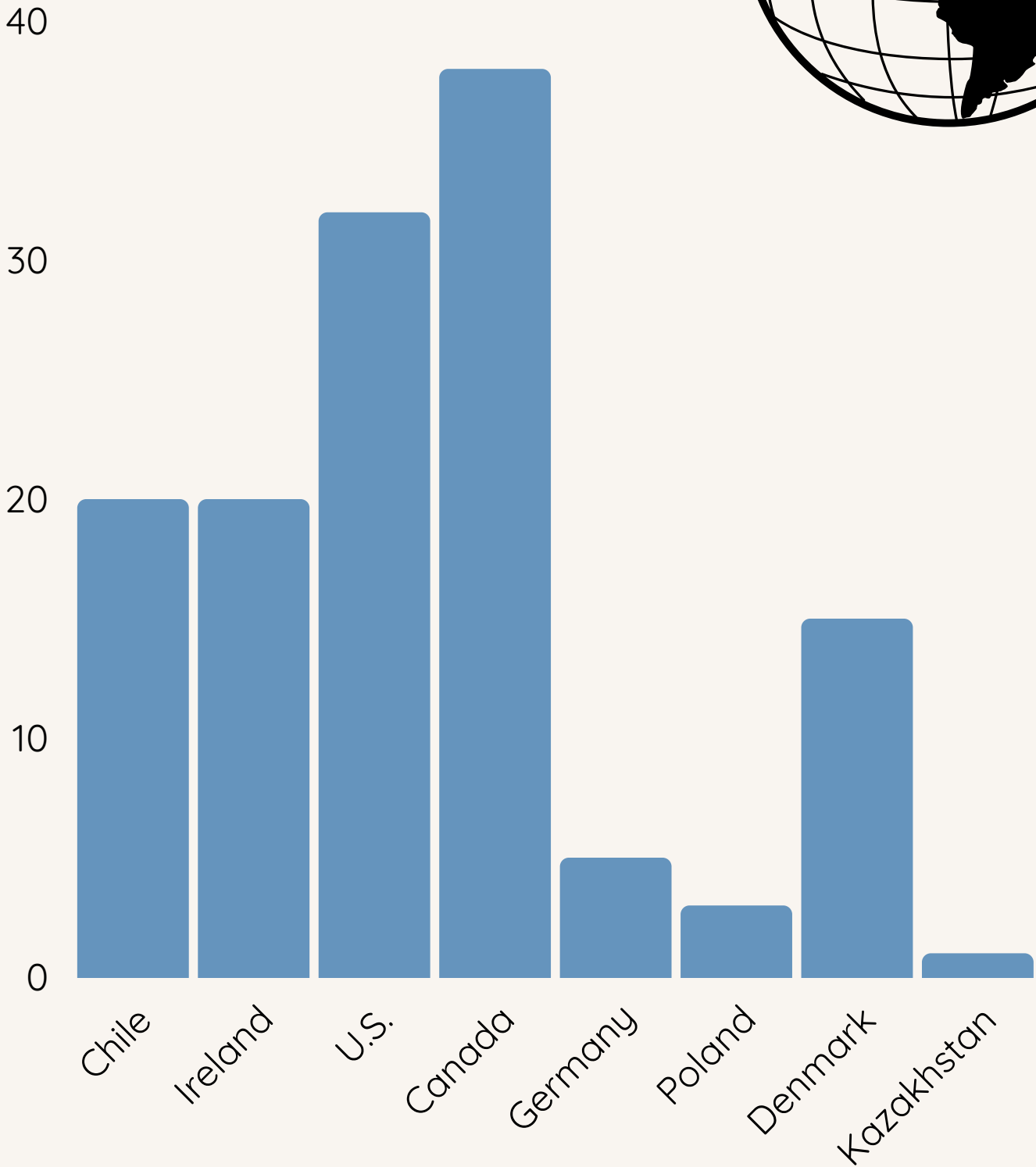
Our 2022 strategy

Ascend had to be flexible and pragmatic in 2022. Our strategy was to ethically and responsibly support people in crisis, while looking ahead to a resumption of our core program and activities.

This meant focusing on several lines of effort simultaneously, managing the day-to-day tasks demanded by a crisis while undergoing strategic planning for an expansion into new places.

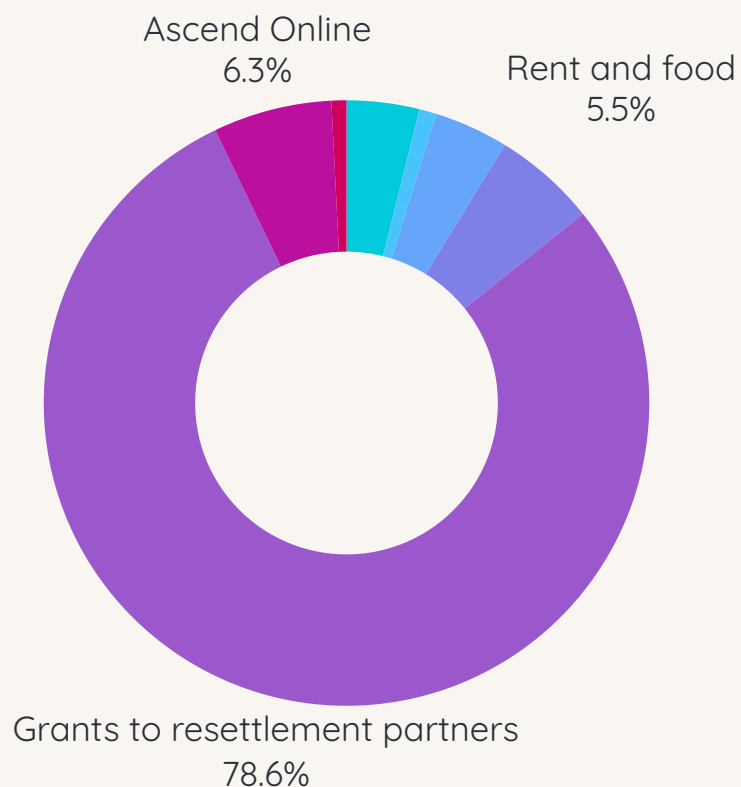
PROJECTS	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Global Resettlement	To responsibly and ethically support 134 people in new homes in 9 countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supported girls in 9 countries with living expenses & scholarships• \$297,739 invested in resettlement
Ascend Pakistan	To launch the Ascend program in Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtained government approval for our program at the presidential level• Surveyed 200 girls to inform program design
Ascend Afghanistan	To serve Afghan girls and women in a Taliban-run Afghanistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retained Ascend's key assets: our training center & equipment• Laid groundwork for re-registration & approval to resume programming

Responsible Resettlement



Recovering from crisis

Where we focused our resettlement resources



702

Hours of instruction we provided through Ascend Online

7

Languages we helped our girls learn

5

New partners and grantees who enabled our work

3

University scholarships awarded

We focused on 8 areas to support and empower our women and girls during a time of intense transition:

- **Education** - high school enrollment, university admissions and master's level study
- **Jobs training** through Ascend Online, partners, and jobs placements
- **Language lessons** to survive and thrive in Danish, Polish, Spanish, English, German, Kazakh, and Irish Gaelic
- **Mentoring** - to navigate the hurdles thrown in front of displaced people and find pathways to success
- **Costs for living** - rent, food, transportation provided directly and through partners
- **Mental health care** - one-to-one counseling, group therapy, and activities to support mental health
- **Physical health & fitness** - online instruction through Ascend Online, provision of climbing gear, gym passes, and bicycles
- **Ascend activities** to reconnect with joy: rock climbing, bouldering, physical fitness, yoga

134

Afghans evacuated
and resettled

\$297,739

Invested to support resettlement of our people



Launching New Programs

Ascend Pakistan
December 11, 2022



A rigorous global search for the right place to expand our program led us to Pakistan.

- A welcoming government
- Urgent need for opportunities for girls
- Spectacular mountain environment
- Vibrant climbing community



We thank you for your ongoing support for our program

Acknowledgements

Ascend is mighty because of its volunteers and supporters. Our loyal donor base of individuals and family foundations, who share our commitment to these girls, make everything we do possible.

We are profoundly grateful for the generosity of an untold number of people who opened their hearts, their homes, and their wallets to help our Afghan alumnae start new lives. We can never name them all but here are a few who led the resettlement effort:

Friends of Ascend Community Support Group Ireland led by Andrea Martin

In Chile, **Sebastian Villarreal Bardet and Leonardo Maldonado**

In the Triangle (U.S.), **Anne McLaughlin, Ashton Drew, and David Thoenen**

In Poland, **Malgorzata Olaskinska-Chart and Lukasz Kocewiak**

In Germany, **Janel Schermerhorn and the American Women's Club of Berlin**

Our voluntary **Board of Directors** and our tireless Ascend volunteers.

Ascend - Leadership Through Athletics

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