

## **DON'T:**

**DON'T have community members, especially those from your country, help you write your statement.** It is natural to trust people who have been here longer than you to help you to complete your asylum forms and write your story down. Unfortunately, they may misunderstand your story or write about things that they know or have learned about your country that aren't part of your own experience. That can cause you problems later with U.S. immigration authorities and cause denial of your asylum application. It is OK to have someone translate the asylum application form to you and to help write down in English your answers to the questions, in your own words. This person must sign the form to show that he or she helped you with the form, under the Immigration rules.

**DON'T believe people who tell you to exaggerate what happened to you.**

Some people will tell you that you have a better chance of getting asylum if you exaggerate what happened to you. For example, if something bad happened to you once, they may tell you to write in your statement that it happened to you twice. Later, when Immigration authorities ask you to describe what happened to you, you will probably remember the truth, and not the exaggeration. Immigration authorities will usually deny asylum to someone who tells them something different than what is written in the application. Always just describe what actually happened, and nothing more.

**DON'T expect that your application for asylum will be decided quickly.**

Immigration has so many asylum applications to decide that it is taking them years to do so. Right now, Immigration is interviewing people who asked for asylum more than 3 years ago. And it can take months, sometimes even a year to get a decision from Immigration after being interviewed. If Immigration denies your case, you will be put into a court process (called "removal proceedings") to expel you, where you can apply again to the judge for asylum. This process can take many more years before you'll get a decision.

**IF YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM ON YOUR OWN (without a lawyer):**

## **DO:**

- Look at the "Asylum Manual" available from ILAP (at <http://bit.ly/1Y34tAG>), that provides information about how to apply, and what documents to include with your application.
- Do NOT send any original documents (such as your passport, any certificates, etc.) to USCIS. (the Immigration authorities). You will take them with you to your eventual interview, instead.
- Make a complete copy of the application to keep for your files before you send your application to USCIS.
- Send the *original* application, plus one copy of the entire application, to USCIS (Immigration).
- Send your application by *certified mail, return receipt requested*. When you receive it from the Post Office, keep your receipt with your copy of the application.
- ALWAYS notify Immigration within a week if you MOVE to a new address. You will need your case number from your asylum application filing receipt. You should file a change of address notice online at <https://egov.uscis.gov/coa/displayCOAForm.do>. **You must do this because if USCIS mails you a notice for fingerprinting or your interview, and you do not receive it, they can deny your application when you do not show up.**

**DON'T apply for asylum just to get an eventual work permit or GA!!!!** Remember – the government may end up deporting you to your home country if you are denied asylum.