

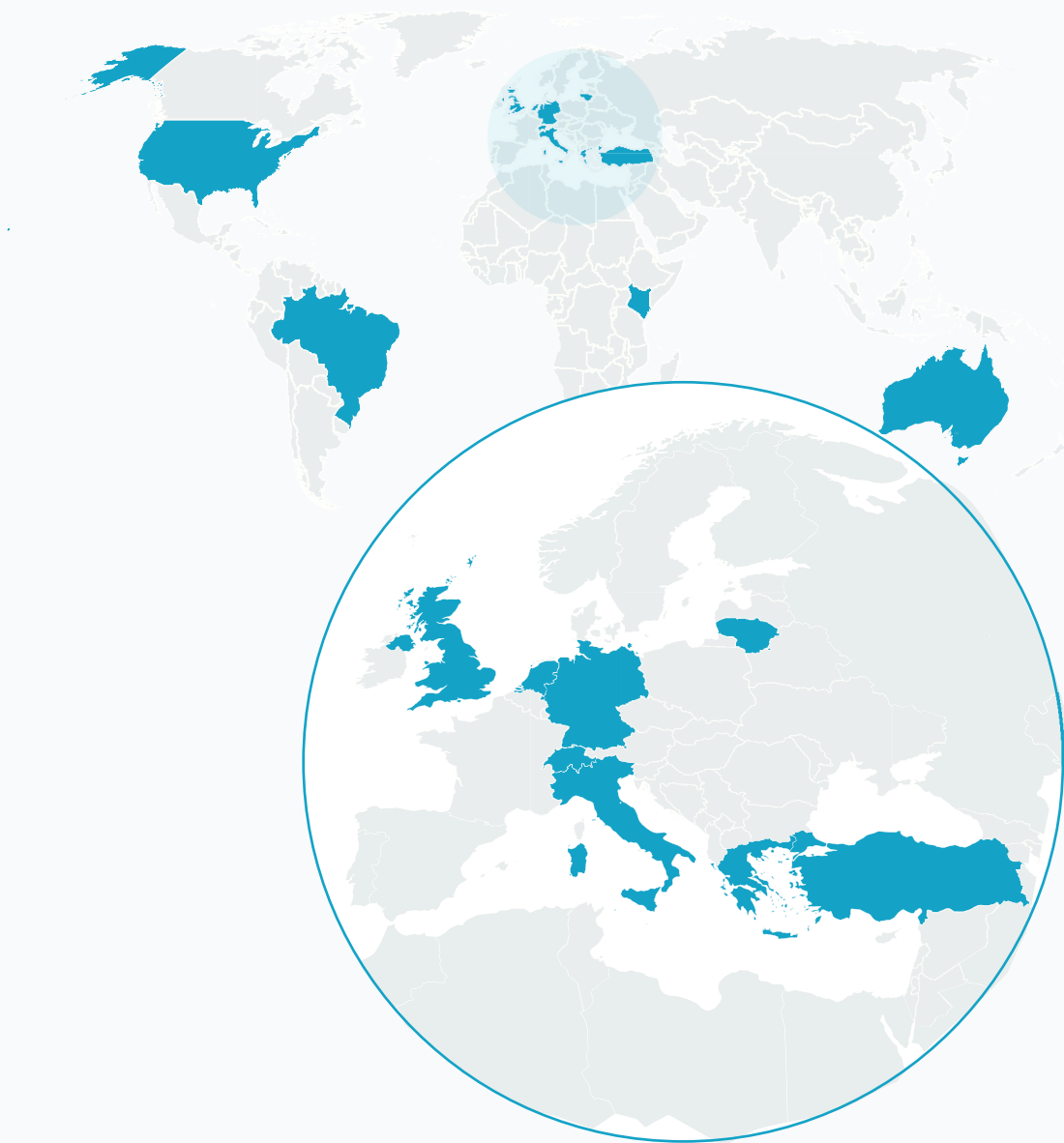


Multi-stakeholder Pledge on Supporting Refugee Family Reunification

Towards 1 million refugee families reunited by 2030

Yohannes, an Ethiopian refugee evacuated from Sudan, is reunited with his mother and welcomed by his step-grandmother at Brussels airport, Belgium.
© UNHCR/Olivier van Naemen.





15
COUNTRIES

USA
BRAZIL

ENGLAND
GERMANY
GREECE
IRELAND
ITALY
LITHUANIA
NETHERLANDS
SCOTLAND
SWITZERLAND
TÜRKIYE
WALES

KENYA

AUSTRALIA

2024 Pledge Community Report

INTRODUCTION

Family unity is a human right. But when families who are forced to flee become separated, restoring family unity can be very difficult – even impossible – without enabling law and policy frameworks, practical and legal support to overcome administrative and logistical hurdles, and actionable data and evidence on the need for and impact of refugee family reunification.

At the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, the Global Family Reunification Network (FRUN) led the Multi-stakeholder Pledge on Supporting Refugee Family Reunification. Aligned with the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030, **our pledge aims to help 1 million refugees reunite with their families by 2030**, by addressing legal and policy barriers, providing support to overcome administrative and legal hurdles, and gathering data on the need for and impact of family reunification.

The multi-stakeholder pledge (MSP) is led by 6 pledge co-leads¹ and supported by UNHCR and the FRUN Advisory Group.² It mobilizes 40 pledging entities, including States, civil society and the private sector.

Having reached the end of the first year of pledge implementation, the FRUN Advisory Group presents the following MSP Community Report, summarizing the pledge progress through 2024. The report highlights the multiplicity of efforts we have all undertaken, both individually and in coordination, towards the pledge goal of helping 1 million families reunite by 2030. The report clusters the pledge progress into 6 categories:

- Regulatory and policy improvements
- Civil society engagement with members of parliament and government officials
- Community mobilization and public engagement
- Partner collaboration on case support and information about family reunification
- Strategic litigation and pro bono legal assistance
- Legal training and capacity development

We are grateful for the quantitative and qualitative data submitted by pledge partners.³ Furthermore, we thank each and every member of the multi-stakeholder pledge community for the part they continue to play towards ensuring that every refugee can exercise their right to family unity.

¹ The Government of Brazil, the Government of Portugal, DLA Piper, Migration Inc., RefugePoint and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) serve as pledge co-leads.

² The FRUN Advisory Group is composed of the British Red Cross, DLA Piper, International Catholic Migration Committee, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), Leiden University, Kids In Need of Defense (KIND), Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), RefugePoint, Safe Passage International, Somali Diaspora in Deutschland (SOMDID), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Youth Voices Community (YVC).

³ 35 respondents provided data through a survey in Q1 of 2025.

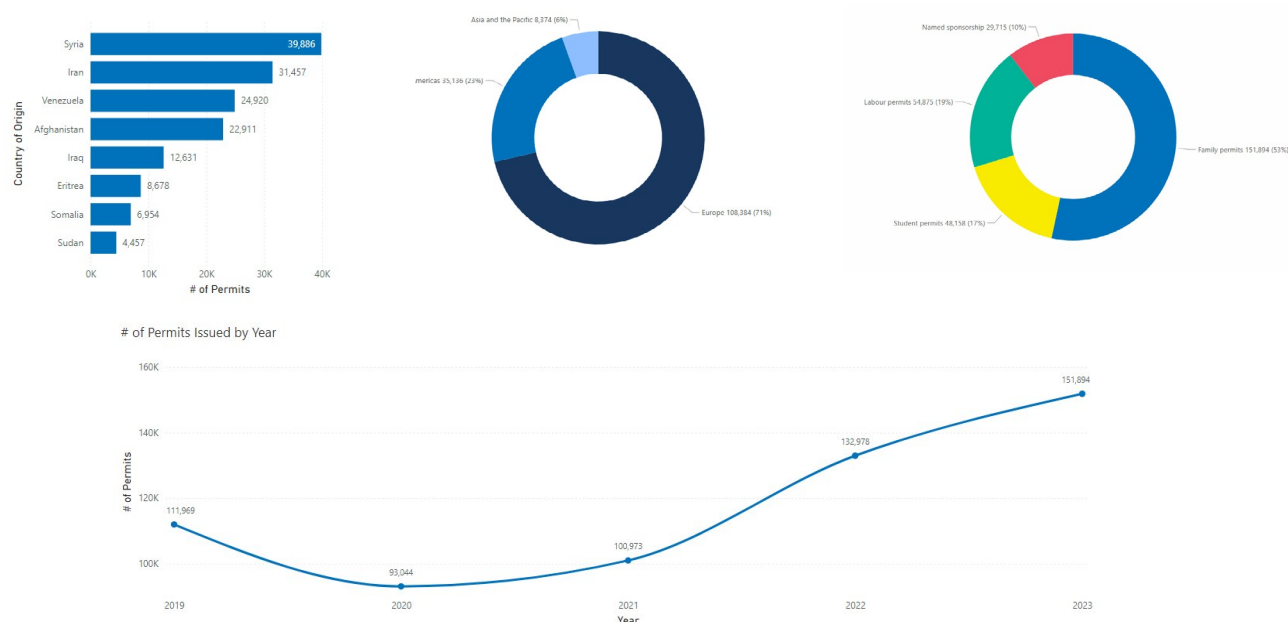
OECD-UNHCR Safe Pathways Report Series: A Baseline and Primary Indicator of Pledge Progress

The primary data source to track overall progress towards the goal of supporting 1 million refugees accessing family reunification by 2030 is the annual report series **OECD-UNHCR: Safe Pathways for Refugees**. This series gathers data on the number of first-time permits granted across OECD countries and Brazil to individuals who may be presumed, based on their nationality, to have a well-founded refugee claim. The data collected covers nationals of eight countries: Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Venezuela.⁴ Through this methodology and scope, the report series provides indicative figures on refugee admissions through complementary pathways (study, work and family permits) beyond resettlement. It constitutes the widest-ranging dataset currently available on complementary pathways.

According to the OECD, **family permits consistently represent the main type** of permanent permit issued by OECD countries. In 2023, there were nearly 152,000⁵ family permits issued to individuals from the eight nationality groups – a 14 per cent increase over the previous year. This figure represents an overall increase of +36 per cent compared to 2019, when the report series and OECD-UNHCR collaboration was launched.

The three graphics below show data on family permits in 2023: number of family permits issued by country of origin (left), number of family permits issued by region of destination (middle) and the total number of complementary pathways permits issued, showing the high proportion of family permits (53%) (right).

The line graph below shows the number of family permits issued in OECD countries each year from 2019 to 2023.



Source: <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/about-gcr/resources/reports/oecd-unhcr-safe-pathways-refugees>

⁴These nationalities have been selected on the basis of several indicators and factors, including their high representation in the global refugee population and their generally high recognition rates.

⁵ It is noteworthy to add that, in addition to the 152,000 family permits issued in 2023, an additional nearly 30,000 permits were issued for named sponsorship, which in many cases also serves to reunite separated family members.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION PLEDGES IN ACTION

Regulatory and policy improvements

The family reunification pledge includes several States that committed to making regulatory and policy improvements to support refugee access to family reunification. Pledge implementation progress was reported by several governments, including notably the **Government of Lithuania**, which fulfilled its pledge to extend the deadline for refugees to apply for family reunification from 3 months to 6 months after the grant of refugee status.⁶ In the United Kingdom, the **Government of Scotland** reported implementing measures to ease barriers to family reunion and boost arrival and integration support for arriving family members. Similarly, the **Government of Wales**, in pursuance of its plan to become the first 'Nation of Sanctuary', funded the Family Reunion Integration Service, delivered by the British Red Cross (see box 1).

The **Government of Brazil** and the **Government of Portugal** demonstrated leadership and shared good practices in global forums on refugee family reunification, notably the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways in Geneva 2024 and the Annual Conference of the Global Family Reunification Network in Istanbul 2024. Brazil additionally reported policy developments in support of family reunification (see box 2).

In Türkiye, the **Turkish Red Crescent** concluded a formal partnership agreement with the Ministry of Family and Social Services to ensure a continuity of care and case coordination for family reunification cases of children in institutional care. In addition, a protocol was drafted with the Presidency of Migration Management to facilitate the work of the Red Crescent in cross-border family reunification of unaccompanied and separated children from Syria.

BOX 1:

Family reunion pledge progress in Scotland and Wales

In pursuance of its commitments under the Multi-stakeholder Pledge on Supporting Family Reunification, the **Scottish** and **Welsh** Governments, in collaboration with the British Red Cross, strengthened the integration experiences of reunited refugee families through strategic partnerships in the framework of the **New Scots Integration Strategy** and the **Nation of Sanctuary Plan** in Wales.

The initiatives conducted within these strategies enable integration to start from day one through advance collaboration across local government actors working to prepare for the families' arrivals.

The British Red Cross established strategic partnerships with local government actors to raise awareness about barriers to family reunion and access to social security, housing, education and other services.

During 2024, over **1,500 individuals** were assisted in Scotland and Wales with **travel, casework, group programmes, and information for family reunion.**

Additionally, policymakers, government bodies and the British Red Cross coordinated to provide opportunities for more than **2,000 refugees to participate and shape integration programmes and action solutions together.**

⁶ The relevant amendment to the 2025 is in Law on the Legal Status of Aliens, (Article 24, paragraph 3) forthcoming in English translation.

BOX 2:

Administrative adjustments to enhance access to family reunification in Brazil

The Government of Brazil pledged to support refugee family reunification by strengthening national mechanisms that ensure refugees can exercise their right to family unity. Through administrative improvements—such as converting refugee extension/ derivative requests into principal asylum claims, simplifying procedures to streamline family reunification requests, and recognizing the diversity of family structures—Brazil is enhancing access to family reunification as a complementary protection pathway. Additionally, the Brazilian Community Sponsorship Program for Afghan nationals integrates family reunification into its core design, reinforcing the principle that protection and integration begin with preserving family bonds.

Specific improvements include:

- Identifying acceptable forms of proof of family ties: Brazil is conducting studies to understand documentation practices in countries of origin, especially those with weakened civil registration systems. The diversity of family documents from different countries has been identified by Brazil as a challenge that often causes case processing delays.
- Ex Officio transformation of applications for extensions/derivative refugee status (e.g., for children or dependents) into principal applications, when this benefits the applicant. This measure has allowed children and adolescents, whose requests are generally tied to those of their parents or legal guardians as extensions or derivative, to be recognized as refugees in their own right.
- Improving transparency and communication of actionable information on family reunification procedures, particularly through updated content on government websites and refugee-focused communication channels.

Civil society engagement with members of parliament and government officials

2024 saw pledge partners engaging in sustained civil society engagement on refugee family reunification, notably through coordinated advocacy at the local and national levels.

In **Australia**, the **Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA)**, in coordination with other pledge partners, ran a successful advocacy campaign that resulted in refugees with temporary protection being granted permanent status, clearing the way for access to family reunion for those refugees. RCOA also published **briefing papers** and convened roundtable events with key government officials on incorporating complementary pathways and family reunion more effectively into the Australian migration policy landscape.

In Europe, the **International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)** in **Germany** reported sustained advocacy on family reunification, in collaboration with UNHCR and the German Red Cross, including through bi-annual round tables with the Federal Foreign Ministry. In **France**, **IRAP** and **Safe Passage France** coordinated with other NGOs to engage government officials and the French Ombudsman on systemic challenges refugees faced when trying to secure embassy appointments and the negative impact this could have on their family reunification applications. In the **Netherlands**, **Migration Inc.** met with government officials to discuss key systemic challenges in the family reunification journey for refugees in Ethiopia. Finally, in the **United Kingdom**, **RAMFEL** (the Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London) met with parliamentarians to bring attention to the acute need for access to legal aid for refugees applying for family reunion. **Recommendations** were published in a report.

In the Americas, **Kids In Need of Defense (KIND)** held a Forum on the Right to Live in a Family for Children and Adolescents in Human Mobility in **Mexico**, gathering together government and civil society to discuss recommendations to strengthen the protection of unaccompanied children and adolescents in Mexico. The forum focused on family reunification as a key protection measure, exploring progress, challenges, and best practices in public policies and regulatory frameworks to ensure this right. The forum also highlighted the importance of creating mechanisms for cross-border communication and bilateral or multilateral agreements to support family reunification.

Community mobilization and public engagement

Pledge partners reported sustained engagement with civil society partners and the wider community in support of preserving and strengthening access to family reunification for refugees. Some highlights include the following: Swiss legal NGO **Asylex**, which reported broad mobilization against proposed new restrictions to family reunification for refugees with Temporary Protection status in **Switzerland**. Following sustained public pressure, the

restrictions were blocked by the Swiss Federal Council. In **Greece**, **Safe Passage** coordinated with partners on **public interventions** to highlight insurmountable challenges some refugees experienced when trying to apply for family reunification pursuant to the European Union's Family Reunification Directive. Safe Passage Greece also publicly called attention to the plight of unaccompanied children in refugee camps in Greece as well as gaps in the national legal guardianship system, in a joint statement with other Child Rights Advocacy Network (CRAN) members. **Migration Inc.** continued to share refugee and diaspora experience to promote a wider understanding of the barriers to family reunification at different community events in the **Netherlands**, notably at the Rooted Festival and other public events in collaboration with the Dutch Council of Refugees, UNHCR and (refugee-led) organizations.

■ Partner collaboration on case support and information about family reunification

At the global level, **RefugePoint** continued to expand its engagement on family reunification, staffing the Secretariat of the Global Family Reunification Network and the Chair of its Advisory Group since January 2024. This included leading the organization of the 2024 annual in-person conference of the FRUN and hosting numerous other events throughout the year for the FRUN Community of Practice, leading the Advisory Group's outreach efforts to recruit new members, in particular refugee-led organizations; and general coordination of the FRUN's work plan and activities. RefugePoint also concluded a global Secondment Partnership Agreement with UNHCR that allows for the secondment of family reunification Experts to UNHCR operations. Secondees will support family reunification capacity building through partnerships and collaboration as well as exceptional direct service casework.

Still at the global level, the **Public Interest Law Network (PILnet)** commenced work to map pro bono legal capacity for third country solutions,¹³ while **DLA Piper** developed a **mapping tool** of existing partners in the family reunification pledge to facilitate transnational collaboration between pledge partners.

In **Kenya**, **RefugePoint** spearheaded the establishment of the Interagency Family Reunification Working Group in Nairobi (see box 3), bringing together a growing community of organizations in the Kenyan capital supporting refugees at different stages of the family reunification application process. **Youth Voices Community**, itself a member of the Interagency Family Reunification Working Group in Nairobi, played a critical role mediating between legal actors and refugee communities on opportunities and requirements for family reunification. In **France**, **IRAP** and **Safe Passage France** continued to be active members of the Family Reunification Working Group there, meeting regularly throughout 2024 to exchange legal knowledge, practice and successes in family reunification.

Several pledge partners produced and maintained high quality information materials, tools and resources, expanding the base of accessible, accurate and actionable information about family reunification options. In addition, organizations such as **RACS** in **Australia**, **SOMDID** in **Germany**, **Migration Inc.** in the **Netherlands**, **Youth Voices Community** and **RefugePoint** in **Kenya**, **RAMFEL** in the **UK**, and **HIAS** in the **USA**, conducted variously community information-sharing initiatives, individualized counselling and navigation support to promote access to accurate and relevant information about refugee family reunification. In **Togo**, **GovRise** is conceptualizing an AI-powered information portal that customizes family reunification information (country-specific procedures, legal actors and support organizations) based on user requirements.

BOX 3:

Interagency Family Reunification Working Group in Kenya

The Inter-Agency Family Reunification Working Group (IAFRWG) was established on June 13, 2024, in Kenya as a collaborative platform bringing together key actors engaged in family reunification, including UNHCR, IOM, CWS-Africa, HIAS-Kenya, RELON Kenya, Youth Voices Community, RefuShe, and RefugePoint. The group seeks to enhance coordination, policy development, advocacy, capacity sharing, and the adoption of best practices. The IAFRWG connects a broad range of stakeholders—government agencies, NGOs, refugee-led organizations (RLOs), and international bodies—to share expertise, align strategies, and promote solutions that address legal, administrative, and practical barriers to family reunification.

A key feature of the IAFRWG is its structured referral mechanism, which facilitates efficient case management and avoids duplication of efforts. For example, family reunification (FR) cases bound for Germany are referred to IOM's Family Assistance Project, while child custody and protection matters are directed to RELON Kenya and the Refugee Consortium of Kenya. UNHCR provides support in cases requiring documentation or expedited refugee status determination. UNHCR advocates with the Kenyan government on documentation and registration challenges. RefugePoint, Youth Voices Community, and RELON Kenya engage in FR outreach activities where they sensitize refugee communities on the FR services they provide. The working group supports peer-to-peer learning and capacity strengthening among members. Unaccompanied children in need of FR assistance are referred to RefugePoint, which offers specialized protection and reunification services. This collaborative model ensures a more effective, child-sensitive, and holistic response to family separation in refugee contexts.

Data Analysis on Family Reunification Services Provided by Pledge Partners

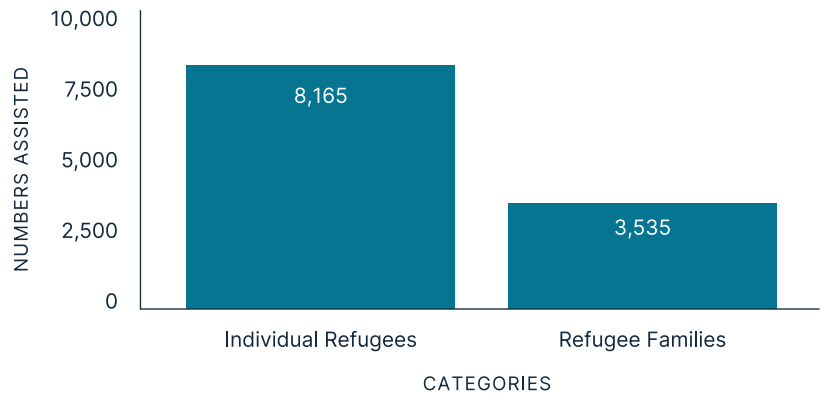
Pledge partners⁷ reported data on the type and number of practical interventions undertaken in support of refugee family reunification. The below data shows pledge progress during the calendar year 2024 and will be added to each year to reflect further progress.

NOTE: the below indicators are not applicable to the work of all pledge partners and therefore does not seek to represent all pledge activity.

According to the numbers reported, pledge partners assisted 8,165 individual refugees and 3,535 families with family reunification services in 2024.

Number of Families and Individuals Supported by Pledge Partners

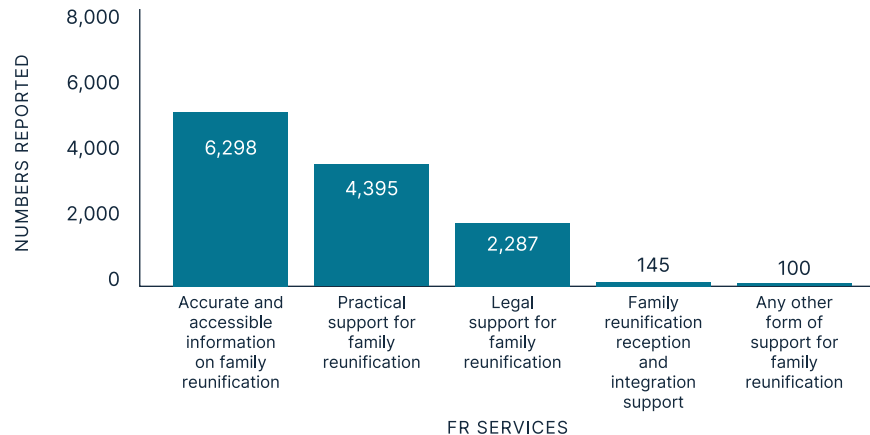
Source: Multi-stakeholder Pledge to Support Refugee Family Reunification - Pledge Partner Questionnaire 2024. N = 27



According to the numbers reported, pledge partners assisted refugees through the following different services.

Number of Individuals Reached

Source: Multi-stakeholder Pledge to Support Refugee Family Reunification - Pledge Partner Questionnaire 2024. N=27



NOTE: The 6,298 figure relates to individual outreach and counselling and does not include the online reach to families who accessed digital legal and practical information on organizational websites, which is of course considerably higher.

⁷ Pledge partners that contributed data on individual support interventions are: Asylex, DLA Piper, Government of Wales, Government of Scotland, HIAS, Iberia, IRAP, KIND, Migration Inc., RACS, RAMFEL, RefugePoint, Safe Passage International, SOMDID, Turkish Red Crescent, Youth Voices Community.

Strategic litigation and pro bono legal support

Pledge partners, notably legal non-profits and private sector legal service providers, engaged in different forms of pro bono support for family reunification, including strategic and international litigation. For example, in Switzerland, **Asylex** activated the **complaints mechanisms** of UN human rights treaty bodies (the Committee for the Rights of the Child, the Committee against Torture) to enforce protection of the right to family life and family unity in the assessment of family reunification applications.

Other examples of international/supranational strategic litigation conducted by pledge partners included a case brought by **IRAP** Europe against **Sweden** before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) to challenge the maintenance requirement to access family reunification. Global law firm **DLA Piper** supported refugee family reunification cases before the ECtHR arguing insurmountable challenges to documentary requirements for family reunification, due to statelessness⁸ document issuance by an unrecognized authority⁹ and lack of access to identity documentation due to asylum seeker status.¹⁰ DLA Piper also provided pro bono legal representation to the Greek Council of Refugees to challenge systemic barriers to family reunification procedures under Art 8 ECHR (right to family life and privacy), and to other NGOs in **New Zealand** and the **United Kingdom**.

A number of legal NGOs secured new or expanded pro bono legal partnerships in 2024, including the **Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS)** in **Australia**, **RAMFEL** in the **United Kingdom**, **Safe Passage** in **France** and **Greece** and **IRAP** in **France**, **Germany** and the **USA**. Family reunification applications litigated in court typically involved challenges to long wait times for processing, difficulties accessing appointments at diplomatic posts and other systemic barriers encountered by refugee families. **Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)** collaborated with NGO and pro bono partners in **Ireland**, **Italy**, **France** and **Greece** on family reunification support to unaccompanied children. **KIND** attorneys were also among the first to **provide legal representation** to children in the Central American Minors (CAM) Program.

Legal training and capacity development

Legal training on refugee family reunification applications was delivered by a number of different pledge partners during the year, including **DLA Piper**, **HIAS**, **IRAP**, **KIND**, and **Safe Passage**. Training covered a range of themes, including eligibility, procedural requirements and timeframes. Training targeted case identification and referral partners, local service providers and social workers, and members of the legal community. In addition, pledge partners produced legal advisories, webinars, advocacy materials, reports and practice guides on family reunification, including marriage-based family reunification for LGBTQI+ couples and humanitarian parole for Afghans in the US (a FR pathway for many Afghan families).

⁸ Concerns a Rohingya family from Bangladesh. DLA challenged the gap in national legislation to facilitate family reunification of refugees without the ability to obtain travel documents.

⁹ Concerns an Afghan national whose FR procedure was blocked when the authorities refused to accept a Taliban-issued passport.

¹⁰ Concerns a Burundi national facing insurmountable challenges obtaining the required travel documents due to their status as asylum seekers.

At the international level, DLA Piper produced comparative legal research for UNHCR on family reunification requirements in different countries, and the **Public Interest Law Network (PILnet)** delivered practical information sessions to refugee-led organization members of the FRUN on how to access pro bono legal assistance for their work in family reunification.

■ Looking ahead

As the MSP community folds gradually into the wider community of the Global Family Reunification Network and its Community of Practice, we look forward to this dynamic global movement continuing to grow in number and impact. Indeed, in an international protection landscape characterized by sudden and severe funding cuts and significant reductions in resettlement quotas, it is more important than ever for states and other stakeholders to come together to sustain and expand access to family reunification migration pathways as a durable solution for refugees.

With collective resolve and determination, we look forward to reporting continued progress towards our pledge goal of supporting 1 million refugees to access family reunification by 2030.

ANNEX 1:

Pledge entity and pledge name/ reference of partners who contributed data to this 2024 update.

| Entity Name | 2023 GRF Pledge Name |
|--|---|
| Asylex | Innovative Free Online Legal Advice for Refugees and Asylum seekers in the Context of Family Reunification (GRF-07962) |
| DLA Piper | Provide pro bono assistance to NGOs, FDPs to facilitate family reunification procedure and the rights to family unity (GRF 07776) |
| European Union | EU pledge - Resettlement and complementary pathways (GRF 08286) |
| Government of Brazil | Improve existing mechanisms to realize the right to family reunification for refugees (GRF-08183) |
| Government of Lithuania | Refugee family reunification - extension of the deadline for submitting an application for reunification (GRF-07217) |
| Government of Portugal | Promote streamlined procedures for family reunification (GRF 08019) |
| GovRise | Empowering refugee family reunification in the multistakeholder context through advocacy with onsite and online support (GRF 08162) |
| HIAS | Access to Justice for Refugees (GRF-07909) |
| HIAS | Facilitate access to family reunification through collaboration with and technical assistance to implementing partners (GRF 07811) |
| International Refugee Assistance Project | IRAP's 2023 GRF Pledge on Refugee Family Reunification (GRF-08033) |
| Kids In Need of Defense | Legal Assistance, Advocacy and Capacity Building to Enable Unaccompanied Children to Reunify With Their Families (GRF 08536) |

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|--|--|
| NASC | Supporting refugee family reunification in Ireland (GRF-07682) |
| Migration Inc. | Support and facilitate access to family reunification through strategic partnerships and refugee leadership (GRF-08047) |
| Türk Kizilay | Supporting Family Reunification of Minors under the Protection of Turkish Government (GRF-09024) |
| PILnet: PILnet: The Global Network for Public Interest Law | Mobilization of PILnet's network to increase legal assistance for displaced people, RLOs and other CSOs (GRF-08360) |
| PILnet: PILnet: The Global Network for Public Interest Law | Mobilization of PILnet's network to increase legal assistance and legal advocacy to support refugees to exercise their right to family unity (GRF-08469) |
| Scottish Government | Scotland's New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy refresh and refugee involvement (GRF-08801) |
| Safe Passage International | Safe Passage International's commitment towards family reunification - 2024-2027 (GRF-07711) |
| Somali Diaspora in Deutschland RAMFEL | Provision of support and facilitation of family reunification in Germany (GRF-07512) |
| Refugee and Migrants Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL) | Family reunification casework and campaigns-RAMFEL (GRF 07710) |
| Refugee Council of Australia, with Amnesty International (Australia), NSW Teachers Federation, HOST International, Refugee Advice Casework Service, SCALES Community Legal Centre, Community Migrant Resource Centre, Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Zomi Innkuan Adelaide, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia, NSW Refugee Communities Advocacy Network | <p>Australian civil society pledge on resettlement and complementary pathways advocacy (GRF-08081)</p> <p>RCOA pledge on complementary pathways advocacy (GRF 07648)</p> |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| RefugePoint | Facilitating access to family reunification through client support, strategic partnerships, and refugee leadership (GRF-07887) |
| Welsh Government | Wales - Nation of Sanctuary (GRF-08782) |
| Youth Voices Community | Strengthening Family Reunification Through Community Outreach and Support. |