

Project Overview

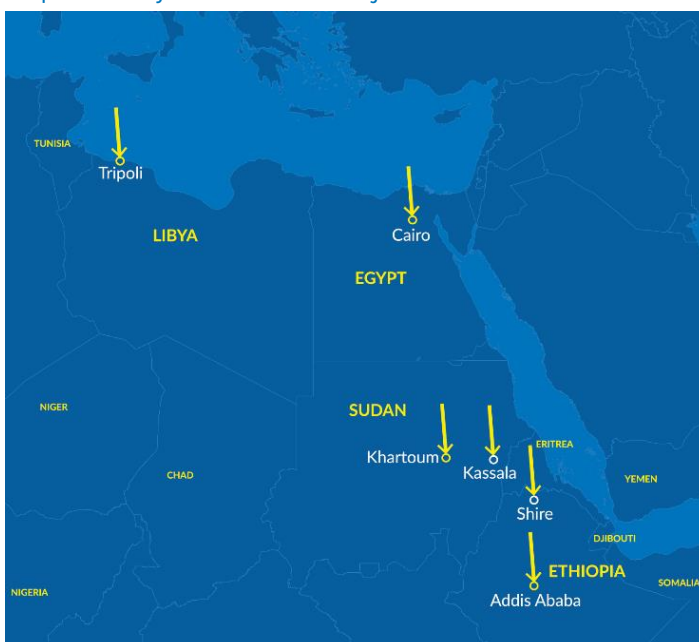
Many refugees leave behind or get separated from their family during flight. While legal family reunification (FR) processes in theory should benefit any qualifying family member, refugees worldwide, particularly children, often face significant difficulties accessing family reunification. These include difficulties understanding the application process, obtaining documentation within or outside their country of origin, accessing the relevant embassy, meeting the related costs (DNA, travel, etc.) or other obstacles.

In mid-2019 the UNHCR Office of the Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean Situation launched a pilot project to enhance access to FR for children and youth at-risk in six locations (Cairo, Egypt; Tripoli, Libya; Addis Ababa and Shire, Ethiopia; and Kassala and Khartoum, Sudan). The pilot's initial success resulted in a project that targets primarily European and North American FR cases with a focus on assisting children and youth to reunite with one or both parents. In some locations, the project expanded to also support FR cases of adults to reunify with their spouses.

In addition to working closely with UNHCR Regional Bureaux and Country Offices in Europe and North America, the project's legal partner, International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), works with a team of in-house lawyers, NGO and *pro bono* partners in Europe and North America to provide legal assistance to file and/or litigate FR applications for complex cases and assists UNHCR in advocacy efforts aimed at lifting certain FR requirements and practices that negatively and disproportionately impact refugees.

Additionally, UNHCR partners with RefugePoint to provide some of the deployments of expert staff to UNHCR in the project locations. The staff have expertise in both child protection and durable solutions and serve as the focal points for FR case identification, support and overall systems strengthening.

Map of Family Reunification Project Locations



The type of support the project could provide, depending on the location, includes:

- Identifying cases and individuals for possible family reunification assistance within the refugee population;
- Completing formal Best Interests Procedures for the purpose of FR, which can be submitted in support of an FR application;
- Facilitating the provision of documents for the purpose of FR;
- Providing counselling to individuals in the FR process, including referral of family members abroad to service providers or legal assistance;
- Organizing and executing logistics for the purpose of FR, including but not limited to:
 - a. Facilitating POC movement from one location to another to facilitate Embassy interviews;
 - b. Liaising with host governments for exit visas and formalities;
 - c. Advocating for vulnerable cases to be fast-tracked by the relevant Embassies;
 - d. Assisting in obtaining necessary travel documents (ICRC TDs, CTDs, etc) and facilitating travel;
 - e. Facilitating DNA testing when required;
 - f. Referring cases for financial travel assistance and support;
- Answering queries from NGOs and private and *pro bono* lawyers who need input or assistance to help move cases forward, so long as the relevant consent is obtained;
- Participating and organizing working group meetings with Embassies;
- Responding to protection concerns on individual cases while FR is pending;
- Ensuring integrity and fraud prevention in the FR process;
- Gathering case examples to be used for FR advocacy;
- Assisting with identification of precedent cases for strategic litigation;
- Ensuring legal assistance, where applicable, is available to FR applicants.

Contact Information by Location

Legal practitioners and NGOs seeking to contact the project's Experts can refer below to the following functional email addresses:

Sudan: sudkhfr@unhcr.org

Ethiopia: ethadfru@unhcr.org

Egypt: arecafru@unhcr.org

Libya: frulibya@unhcr.org

This contact information is also published on UNHCR's *Telling The Real Story* website www.tellingtherealstory.org, a social media platform dedicated to communicating with communities about the dangers of onward movement.